A WAYFARER IN SPAIN

ALICE M. S. NEWBIGIN

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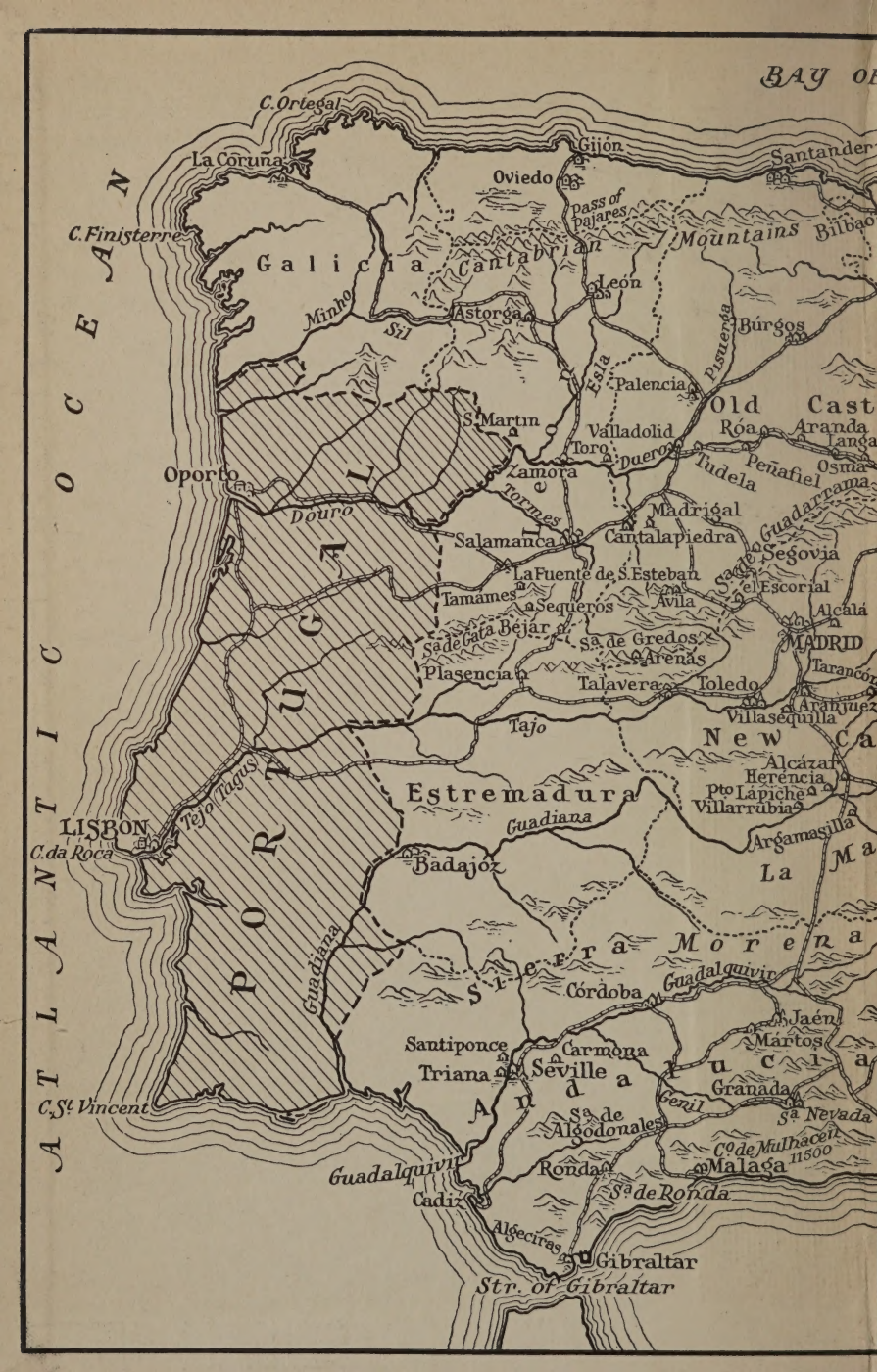
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SKETCH MAP OF SPAIN
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A WAYFARER IN SPAIN

THE INFANTA
(VELÁSQUEZ. PRADO, MADRID)

A WAYFARER IN SPAIN

BY

ALICE M. S. NEWBIGIN

WITH 16 ILLUSTRATIONS AND A MAP

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A WAYFARER IN SPAIN

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION—INCIDENTS OF TRAVEL

"Vain, very vain, my weary search to find
That bliss which only centres in the mind."

SUCH is the lament of an eighteenth-century traveller after visiting several European countries in pursuit of happiness! A doleful decision to come to, no doubt, but one which has never damped the enthusiasm of other travellers in their passion for foreign scenes. Those who have already explored, though not exhausted, the Continental countries near at hand may with advantage turn their thoughts to Spain, where they will find much that is novel and attractive. The expression "Castles in Spain" has always had an alluring sound as of something far away and unattainable, but in reality a *Château en Espagne* is no more difficult of access than an Italian or a French one. The distance from England may be considered a disadvantage, but the long journey has no real terrors—apart from the fatigue consequent on excessive railway travelling—and there are plenty of interesting towns in France where one may spend a night and regain energy for the next day's start.

There are three railway routes from Paris by which we may reach the Spanish frontier: one leads through

Lyons to Provence, where we branch off westwards and go through Cette and Narbonne ; another takes through Limoges and Toulouse and eastwards to Carcassonne and Narbonne, while the third leads south through Bordeaux and Bayonne. That is, roughly speaking, we may reach our destination by the east of France, by the west, or through the centre. Whichever end of the Pyrenees one reaches, however, a change of trains at the frontier is a necessity, as the gauge of the Spanish railway line is wider than that of the French—thus does the Iberian Peninsula, at the outset, show itself different from other Continental countries.

First of all, then, let us consider whether we wish to enter Spain by the sparkling Mediterranean or the stormy Atlantic Ocean, the eastern or the western end of the Pyrenees. In either case, we do not plunge at once into Castilian-speaking Spain. At the Cerbère-Port-Bou end we enter Catalonia, at the Hendaye-Irun end the Basque country, and the towns of both districts have the names of their streets stuck up in two languages—Spanish and Catalonian on the one hand, Spanish and Basque on the other. The Catalonian language is allied to the Provençal of France, while the Basque is spoken on both sides of the Pyrenees. At both ends of these mountains in days gone by the waves of civilization have washed to and fro over the comparatively low ground near the coast, but the main barrier range has proved a cliff wall against the tide of friend or foe—one part, indeed, on the Spanish side, Andorra, has been left so high and dry that it proudly claims to be an Independent European State.

On a first visit most people prefer to enter Spain at one end of the Pyrenees and leave it at the other, as this gives one some slight idea of the country as a whole. Moreover, it is a land of such infinite variety that the more angles one can see it from the better. Perhaps no country can

have so many descriptions given of it, all different yet all correct. Magnificent scenery, dreary landscape, rich cultivation, monotonous plains, "the horrors of an African desert", or a "paradise on earth"—this is what awaits the wayfarer as he travels from village to town, or from beauty to boredom, in this land of contradictions.

Having duly arrived in Spain let us consider conditions there. In the first place, the Spanish railway system is not quite so inefficient as it is sometimes painted; it is to be admitted, of course, that there are certain mysteries connected with some of the trains—mysteries which baffle the seeker after truth—but on the whole it is lack of quantity rather than lack of quality of which one has to complain. Thus the length of one's stay in a place may be determined not so much by enthusiasm for the locality as by the fact that there is no convenient train by which one can leave it, and for a similar reason one may have to curtail a pleasant visit because there happens to be a train on that particular day.

As for the people of the country, they are delightfully friendly and kind-hearted, possessed of charming manners, they are courteous and cordial towards the stranger within their gates—always provided that the latter can speak to them a little in their own tongue. It may be emphasized here that some knowledge of Spanish is essential if one wishes to get the full benefit of one's trip. To go about in a foreign country both deaf and dumb is not the most interesting way of travelling.

As to the hotels, they are almost uniformly good; one says "almost" as there are exceptions to this as to every rule; but they are nearly all clean and well kept, and, if every country inn is not a "castle", one learns to adapt oneself to new conditions and to enjoy the novelty of the unknown. It is not suggested, of course, that a trip in Spain—particularly if one leaves the beaten tourist

track—is "roses, roses all the way," as there are sometimes hardships to contend with or weary waiting moments to fill; but all this is far outbalanced by the fascination which the country exercises over those who visit it. It is a land of contrasts, a topsyturvydom, where wine is plentiful and water precious, where quiet days alternate with noisy nights; a land where one may look in vain for a stream in the river-bed, where the tinkling of innumerable goat-bells mingles with the pealing of church bells, where the women dress in black and use a fan in church though a hat may be forbidden; a land where a clap of the hands at the railway station brings a porter; a land of ancient culture where many of the inhabitants can neither read nor write; a land of prehistoric art, of classical remains, of Moorish mosques and palaces, of Visigothic or Gothic churches; a land, in short, where one begins to doubt the truth of the statement

"Oh! East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet."

Incidents of Travel

Before we went to Spain we had some faint idea of the manners and customs of the people—at least we thought we had, though the experiences of others never seem to be quite as poignant as one's own. We had been told, for instance, not to be surprised if questions of a personal nature were put to us by fellow-travellers, and we were urged not to take offence thereat.

A Spanish gentleman, commenting on the usual course adopted by Englishmen in a railway carriage, complained: "As soon as they get in, they open out a large newspaper, hide themselves behind it, and that is as much as you see or hear of them for the rest of the journey. In Spain such things could not be."

In a country where the bulk of the people take little

interest in books, and where it is no uncommon thing to come across adults who can neither read nor write, one must not be surprised if a " warm human interest " frequently seems to dominate every other, the result being an insatiable curiosity about others. The most striking example of this which we came across was on the long journey from Madrid to Seville—not that the Grand Inquisitor was in our carriage all the time, fortunately. For some distance we had felt ourselves to be the subject of much speculation on the part of the Spanish lady sitting in the far corner ; however, another solitary passenger opposite to her (there were only four of us in the carriage) gave her an opportunity of indulging her conversational powers to the full, and for some hours we were merely deafened by the force and persistency of the duologue.

At length a time arrived when the two strangers had talked themselves out ; then signs of a marshalling of forces began. Preparing for an onslaught, we buckled on our armour and faced the foe steadily.

" Señoritas, where have you come from ? "

" Madrid."

" Where are you going to ? "

" Seville."

" Are you going to a hotel ? "

" Yes."

" Which one ? "

We mentioned the name.

" What are you going to pay there ? "

We gave her the desired information. On hearing the sum, she flung up both hands above her head in horror.

" *Caramba !* I never pay more than ten pesetas *diario* when I am in Seville, and mine is quite a good hotel." After a pause, " How long are you going to stay ? "

" We don't know yet."

"Are you French?"

"No, English."

"Of course, the complexion, I might have known." Here she patted her cheeks with her hand.

"What have you come to Spain *for*?"

"To see the sunshine; we have so little in England."

"The sunshine?" (raising interrogative eyebrows). The window blinds on the sunny side were all carefully drawn down in case any fierce rays of the sun should penetrate the carriage. Our reply did seem inappropriate, somehow. A little time elapsed after this, our cross-examiner evidently revolving things in her mind. Then she returned to the attack.

"*What have you come to Spain for?*"

"To see the country." The answer sounded faint and far away now.

"You have come all the way from England to see *that*?" And a scornful hand was flung out towards the landscape to indicate the unutterably dreary and desolate plains of New Castille through which the train was passing. The tone of the voice implied incredulity, and the reason of our trip did seem lamentably insufficient. Travel for travel's sake was evidently unheard of here.

Rhymes learnt in nursery days suddenly came uppermost in our minds:—

> "I shook him well from side to side,
> Until his face was blue:
> 'Come, tell me how you live,' I cried,
> 'And what it is you do!'"

We waited tremblingly for the shaking process to begin. Again a brief interval, a blissful breathing space. At last a sudden brain-wave seized the indefatigable lady; she leaned forward eagerly in her seat. "Are you artists?" she cried.

Desperately at bay, and feeling that the time had now come for capitulation, we replied feebly, "*Muy poco.*"

Completely satisfied, our inquisitor, her brain worn out by excessive cogitation, leaned back in her cushioned corner and proceeded to enjoy a long, comfortable sleep.

One curious custom in Spanish trains is the etiquette governing the presence of men in a carriage where women are travelling. In England it frequently happens that there are one or more compartments labelled "Ladies Only", these being reserved for the one sex, though it is not unheard of for the opposite sex to invade them. In Spain one sees no such havens of refuge where womenfolk, with a long night journey before them, can travel in comparative seclusion, if so they wish. Instead of this, Spanish women have the right to object if a man enters the carriage, although as a matter of fact they do not seem to exercise this privilege often. We saw an amusing example, however, at the beginning of the thirteen- or fourteen-hour journey from Barcelona to Madrid. Only two express trains in the day leave Barcelona for the capital, the one being about 8 a.m. and the other at 8 p.m. We chose the night express—not without some misgivings as to the amount of sleep we should get. At the *Estación de Francia* we found bustle and excitement reigning, and every evidence of a crowded train. When we had gained a little more experience of Spanish railway travelling, however, we discovered that only a very small proportion of the people at the station are really passengers, the bulk of them being the cousins, uncles, aunts, or friends of the intending voyager.

At length we succeeded in finding two comfortable seats in a carriage where there was apparently only one other passenger—a woman, judging from the wraps lying on the seat. We were congratulating ourselves on our good fortune, when, shortly before the train started, two noisy young men bounced into the carriage and proceeded to fill up every inch of available space with their innumer-

able belongings. Our spirits fell, and we mentally said good-bye to a tranquil journey. A few minutes later a Spanish lady came into the carriage, accompanied by her husband and little girl, who had both come to see her off. For a fraction of a second the husband looked at the two young men, then began : " Excuse me, but my wife would rather . . ." Before the sentence was completed the offenders leapt to their feet, seized their handbags and other impedimenta, murmuring at the rate of twenty times a minute, "*Dispense, dispense, señor!*" and shot out from the carriage in much less time than it takes to tell. Truly Castilian etiquette has its advantages, and is sometimes more efficacious than a piece of paper stuck on with a paste-brush. The Spanish lady proved to be a charming travelling companion, considerate and accommodating in every way, and our only real discomfort was the intense cold which we had to endure in ascending the edge of the plateau.

Friends have sometimes asked if we ever had food offered to us by strangers in a railway carriage. No, we never had this experience, though one sees Spaniards open their *merienda* packets and offer them to neighbours before commencing to eat anything themselves. The origin of this ancient custom is said to be that in offering food to others you thereby remove a danger of their casting the evil eye upon it and so rendering it unwholesome. Spain is one of the few European countries where this relic of a primitive age still lingers. Whether it is a mere superstition nowadays, or whether it is a part of the hospitality and graciousness of the Spanish nature, who can say ?

The fact of there being restaurant-cars on the main-line trains will probably tend to diminish the power of the " evil eye," but in remote districts its influence is no doubt as potent as ever.

CHAPTER II

BARCELONA—MONTSERRAT

BARCELONA, the principal town in Catalonia and its old capital, was our first experience of a big Spanish city. It is an infinitely more attractive resting-place than Madrid, the capital of Spain and its rival. The Spanish Manchester, as it is sometimes called, presents a smiling face to the stranger, and does not thrust forward its mills and factories in an aggressive manner as the comparison seems to suggest. The principal streets are wide, well planned, and well kept, and at the main crossings there are small parks, or *plazas*, planted with palms and other trees. The chief street of all, the Rambla, is a splendid street, very wide and beautifully planted with plane-trees. It leads straight up from the sea into the fashionable part of the town, and is one of the main thoroughfares for traffic. Beginning at the *Plaza de Cataluña*, a fine open square, and nearly parallel to the Rambla, is the *Paseo de Gracia*. This is a shorter street, but an even more attractive one than the Rambla. It is some 200 feet wide and is a veritable forest with its double row of plane-trees. Close to the pavement, at each side of the street, runs a single tram-line—one taking passengers southwards and seawards, the other northwards. Beyond each tram-line is a wide piece of ground planted with trees and provided with many seats. This is the pedestrians' sanctum. Beyond this is the immensely wide central roadway, the *carrera*, for vehicular traffic. The providing

of seats in the two avenues is a thoughtful touch on the part of the municipality; no doubt they realize that it is a long journey from one side of the street to the other and that many hazardous adventures are encountered in the crossing, so they kindly provide a haven of refuge where pedestrians can pause and regain strength before setting forth once more. Years ago children in North Country districts used to play a game called "Tiggy Touch-Wood", in which the skill consisted in darting across an open space, the lair of the "enemy", and safely reaching a "bay" at the other side, where no harm could assail. As long as the player had his hand on a tree-trunk, or some other substance which was agreed on, the foe had no power over him. Thus it was in the *Paseo*; having braved the danger zone, where lurked the taxis and motor-cars—there seems to be no speed limit here—the timorous mortal could rest awhile under the shade of the plane-trees, knowing that here no enemy dare venture.

Towards five or six o'clock in the evening the traffic would assume alarming proportions. A never-ending stream of vehicles raced down the smooth, shining roadway —a continuous procession of smart motor-cars following one another in endless succession; a few horse-drawn carriages were interspersed, but these were rare compared with the number of automobiles. Not much sign here of poverty-stricken Spain—wealth and prosperity breathed from every passing vehicle. In contrast to this incessant movement there were the motionless mounted soldiers. During our visit to Barcelona the city was thronged with military—indeed, the civilians seemed to be in a minority. Every crossing had its group of uniformed men on horse-back; hour after hour they sat immobile on their splendid mounts, and so motionless were they that one came to think of them as equestrian statues, placed there for all time as an ornament to the street.

At the fashionable hour, five or six o'clock, the *nounous* would appear in the Rambla, bearing their precious burdens in their arms and promenading with them under the shade of the plane-trees. These magnificent nurses, walking three or four abreast, would come sailing down the avenue with queenly dignity, brooking no interference from humbler pedestrians, who had to scatter at their approach. Their uniform was evidently prescribed by rules of etiquette, and varied little in individual cases. Always they wore an immaculately clean, striped print-dress, a large white starched apron, white stockings, and black shoes. Their ornaments were a pair of huge gold earrings and a large old-fashioned brooch. Their precious bundles were wrapped in soft shawls and rarely gave signs of life, being usually asleep. We were much attracted by a beautiful young *nounou* the day we returned from Montserrat. We were in the funicular railway which runs down to Monistrol, and in the tiny carriage was a prosperous-looking middle-class couple who had been taking their children to see the monastery. They had two little boys and a baby, the latter, of course, in the entire charge of the *nounou*. The mother seemed to concern herself not at all with her youngest offspring, although the father played with it from time to time. The nurse, however, fed it and treated it as if it were her own. She was a most lovely young girl, probably not more than nineteen years of age, and a splendid type of Catalonian peasant. Her smooth olive skin and rich complexion, her dark glossy hair, her pleasant smile, and her air of perfect health and strength, made up a charming picture, and the babe seemed to be thriving under her care. We wondered, however, what had become of her own infant and whether it had dwindled and died, as is said to be so often the case when the young mother takes a handsomely paid post in the big city.

At the southern end of the Rambla is the Flower Market (*Rambla de las Flores*), and we wandered down here sometimes and revelled in the wealth of roses, carnations, and other flowers which were set out for sale in the central walk. The Rambla leads straight down to the harbour, and the lofty monument to Christopher Columbus forms a fitting termination to this long, attractive street. The figure of Colón, as the Spanish call him, is seen on the top of a high column. The great traveller looks southwards, and no doubt from his exalted position he commands a magnificent view over sea and land. Are his eyes fixed on " that far-distant shore ", that undiscovered country which he was able to announce to an astonished world ? Or is he looking towards a little hamlet near Granada, where a haughty queen, having waved the mariner away, refusing to give money for a fantastic scheme, suddenly relented, called him back, and graciously agreed to the terms for which he was holding out before he embarked on his long, hazardous voyage.

The Rambla ends at the *Paseo de Colón*—a fine promenade, 140 feet wide, which runs along by the harbour front in both directions. The view of the sea, however, is rather blocked by the large warehouses which are ranged on the southern side of the road. The *Paseo* is planted with an avenue of palms, each tree being set in a round sunk basin. It was interesting to see these palms having their daily drink ; the water-cart used to come along in the afternoon, and out of the large hose-pipe a plentiful stream of water was poured into the circular trough. It seemed to be long before the deep pool disappeared, the dry earth absorbing the moisture with great reluctance. This must have been the happiest time of the day to the palm, as at that moment only was its ideal completely realized, the ideal of having its head in the sun and its feet in the water.

BARCELONA

THE PASEO DE COLÓN

Continuing our walk along the *Paseo de Colón*, we came to the narrow street which took off to the left and led up to the old church of Santa Maria del Mar. We were now in one of the poorer districts of the town, and the flight of steps leading up to the building was lined with beggars. Many hands were held out for *limosna* as we passed, and we felt we could not linger to admire the fine west portal. Being near the harbour, this church is said to be much in favour with sailors and seafaring folk generally, though when we entered it was almost empty save for a few old women with black shawls drawn over their heads who were kneeling at a side chapel near the entrance.

Santa Maria, which is on the site of a much older church, was begun early in the fourteenth century and finished late in the fifteenth. It is a simple and impressive structure, but so intensely dark that we found it rather a difficult matter groping our way about. Near a chapel behind the high altar innumerable votive offerings are hung up; these are all given in recognition of marvellous cures effected, and the brief inscriptions often make pathetic reading.

We were fortunate enough to enter Barcelona Cathedral at exactly the right moment of the twenty-four hours, although we were not aware that we had chosen the best time for seeing it. Surely a kind Fate must have ordained this for us! Our visit took place in the early evening when the sun was beginning to sink. As we entered the vast fabric it seemed to be clothed in a rich velvety darkness—the only light there was coming through the small stained-glass windows, which are placed rather high up in the building. The whole interior was shrouded in warm shadows pierced by shafts of light from the setting sun. On the marble pavements patches of glowing colour were formed by the rays which filtered through the windows; these small pools of blue, red, or yellow shone

like jewels, and one almost feared to tread on them, so precious did they look.

Service was going on in the *coro*, and as we waited two choir-boys stepped out of its gloom and capered across to the opposite side near the Capilla Mayor, where they proceeded to light huge candles above the entrance to the crypt. Their scarlet cassocks were lit up by the glow, adding one more touch of colour to the surrounding darkness. The wonderful effects of light and shade reminded one irresistibly of some of Rembrandt's pictures, and his exquisite "Presentation in the Temple" might have found inspiration here.

The Spanish are past-masters in the art of illuminating their churches, in the power of concentrating all the light in one special part of the building so that the maximum emotional effect is obtained. If the traveller is fortunate in the first Spanish church he enters, he will not soon forget the thrill he feels.

Beneath the Capilla Mayor steps lead down to the crypt, where lies the body of Santa Eulalia, the patron saint of Barcelona. The first building to be erected on the site where the cathedral now stands was a pagan temple, then followed a Christian church, which later the Moors turned into a mosque. In 1298 the present cathedral was begun, and the process of construction went on for some forty years. The beautiful cloisters were not completed till the fifteenth century.

Inside the cathedral and high up beneath the organ hangs a model of a Saracen's head; it is more than life-size, and looks large even from a distant viewpoint. The face is flesh-coloured and is realistically treated, and the long black beard helps to give it a life-like appearance. Saracens' heads are said to be a feature of Catalonian churches, but this was the only occasion on which we noticed one, neither Gerona Cathedral nor Tarragona

being able to boast of one of these remarkable objects. After the expulsion of the Moors from Spain no doubt the Christians were glad to have an infidel, now rendered impotent, as a witness to the triumph of the Cross.

While on a visit to Barcelona everyone is supposed to make an excursion to Tibidabo, the conspicuous hill which rises to the north of the city. The tramway leads to the foot of the incline, and then a short journey in a funicular railway brings the traveller to the summit of the hill. The word " Tibidabo " means, of course, " I will give to thee," and this is supposed to be the mountain on the top of which the Saviour was tempted. There is without doubt a magnificent view over city, sea, and surrounding country when the weather is favourable, but our visit was unhappily timed. We had hardly begun our peregrinations in the pine walks which wind round the summit when a dense mist suddenly settled down, blotting out every vestige of view, either near or far. We had only caught a glimpse of blue sea beneath us when everything disappeared, and we found ourselves wrapped around in a damp enfolding blanket. We took refuge in the church, but found this little to our liking, so ornate and glaring was it. It is a new building built at some enormous cost ; everything possible seems to be made of gold, and we could well believe that a great deal of money had been spent. This in itself, however, does not bring the satisfaction that the liberal donors might expect, and one has the feeling that if only they had been a little less generous the result might have been a little more bearable.

Not far from the church are hotels and cheap restaurants ; touts waylay the unwary, and the general atmosphere of Tibidabo is " trippy " and unpleasing. On the whole, though we regretted being deprived of the lovely view, we decided that the most merciful thing that could have happened was that the clouds should descend *en*

masse and that all the horrors around us should be blotted out.

The environs of Barcelona do not seem to be particularly attractive, judging from the little we saw of them. It is pleasant, however, to wander through the streets, where one can generally find something of interest. One remarkable building piqued our curiosity—a modern edifice in the newer part of the town. It was a large house, or block of apartments, and was designed in such a way that as we looked at it we felt as though we were on board a ship in an angry sea. All the lines appeared to be off the straight, and one felt alarmed at this defiance of the law of gravitation. The building was terraced with winding balconies, and realistic flowers or foliage in wrought-iron work grew rampant everywhere. These certainly required to be " trashed for over-topping," and we longed for a pruning-knife. Was the architect thinking of the gypsy cave-dwellings, with their cactus barriers, at Granada ? It was a relief to rest our eyes on ordinary houses again, and no longer feel that we were looking at some object in a defective mirror.

The manners of the Barcelona people struck us as very delightful. Everyone is polite to strangers, and any information asked for, as to the direction of streets, for example, is courteously given. Black is the colour most seen amongst pedestrians, the older women especially being garbed in this sombre hue, though young girls are frequently dressed in colours. Hat-shops are encouraged chiefly by men, a black mantilla forming the usual headgear for a woman.

It is sad to see well-dressed young girls disfigured by the ravages of smallpox. This terrible disease seems to be distressingly prevalent in Spain, and we felt rather glad we had taken the precaution of being re-vaccinated. When we reached the frontier station of Port Bou, on

BARCELONA

SANTA MARIA DEL MAR

our first trip, we at once noticed a magnificent-looking policeman standing near the booking-office—a fine, soldierly six-foot man, he would have presented a striking appearance had it not been that he was deeply pock-marked. As we passed him we realized to the full that we were in Spain.

Extensive building operations are being carried on in Barcelona, and much of the old town is being demolished to make room for more modern streets. Everywhere one sees houses in process of disintegration, and great gaping wounds are exposed to the passer-by. A sudden sound of falling masonry, and the consequent cloud of white dust which immediately rises up, announce to the world that the battle between new and old goes on continuously.

One quite recent building deserves special mention. This is the handsome Royal Palace which Catalonia has built for the King and Queen of Spain. Our visit to the city was well timed, for during our stay *Los Reyes* arrived to take up residence for the first time (May 1924) in the new mansion just presented to them by their subjects. From a balcony in our hotel we had an excellent view of the royal procession. The *Paseo de Gracia*, on which we looked down, was thickly lined with soldiers, and eager pedestrians thronged up and down the avenues. After a long wait cantering horsemen announced that *Sus Majestades* were not far away, and presently the whole cavalcade swung into sight. The crowds below us elbowed each other and pushed hither and thither, children were perched aloft on their parents' shoulders, and the people who had been lucky enough to secure seats to stand on began to get their cameras ready. Aeroplanes hummed overhead and Kodaks clicked in all directions.

We were rather too far from the central road where the procession passed to be able to distinguish faces, but we were at least a witness to the enthusiasm which was

aroused by the advent of royalty. There was much cheering and many signs of spontaneous feeling, and this gained fresh impetus when the carriage in which the Heir-Apparent was sitting followed on that of his parents. The young Prince of the Asturias seems to be particularly popular in Barcelona, and a few days later we had another opportunity of seeing with what cordiality he is received on all sides. This time we were inside the University, and it was amusing to see the exuberant emotion on the part of the students as they shouted and cheered and rushed to and fro in their excitement. In Barcelona, apparently, as elsewhere men look to the younger generation, and live in the hope that they at least will be able to solve the agelong problems which continue to vex the world.

The city seems to be in love with everything young, new, and modern. The fine University, the spacious streets, the handsome buildings, give one an impression of an enterprising, progressive town, where everyone is determined to keep up with the times. We saw nothing of bombs or anarchists, or indeed of any Red Hand—not that we felt this to be a loss—although before our visit the word "Barcelona" meant little else to us. The name used to suggest Manchester, or bombs, or nuts. It does not resemble in the least our great Lancashire town; it was happily not the season for bombs during our visit, while as for Barcelona nuts we saw none until we reached Tarragona, where they are grown in large quantities.

Barcelona was the first city we visited on our first trip to Spain. "Yes," says the critic, "but it is in Catalonia, of course, and is not typically Spanish." Granted, but it forms a part of the Iberian Peninsula and must be treated as such. Here we stayed in a first-class hotel, and, contrasting actualities with preconceived ideas, we were duly impressed.

When Théophile Gautier was about to enter Spain for

the first time friends took care to remind him of what was in store at the village inns, and phrase-books for the use of travellers contained dialogues to the following effect :—

" I would like to have something."

" Have a chair," replies mine host.

" Very good, but I would prefer to have something more nourishing."

" What have you brought ? " continues the innkeeper.

" Nothing," returns the traveller sadly.

" Well, then, how do you think I can give you food ? The butcher is yonder, and the baker farther away : go and fetch bread and meat, and if there is any coal my wife, who has some slight knowledge of cooking, will prepare you a meal."

Imaginary conversations such as these are best not recalled at homely inns, as, for instance, the one we stayed in at Játiva, where we waited an interminable period for a dinner which was quite inadequate to the size of our appetite. But at Barcelona we revelled in good cooking and modern comforts of all kinds. No need to brace oneself against hardships here. Our large bedroom—" everything in it is entirely new, and the alterations are just completed ", the chamber-maid informed us in impressive tones—had a convenient dressing-room attached, off which opened a thoroughly up-to-date bathroom, with unlimited hot water, and sprays, douches, shower-baths enough to satisfy a Roman emperor. As for the number of bath-towels supplied daily, their name was legion, and in size they were fitted to enfold a giant. Everything was on a generous scale, and the chamber-maid kept our writing-table so piled up with the hotel stationery and post cards that had we written reams of letters we could scarcely have exhausted all the supply.

Hotel-keepers here evidently pride themselves on the number of bathrooms which their houses contain, and

one sees their huge advertisements at the railway stations. "Hotel X has 300 bedrooms, each with its own bathroom." In country *fondas*, where the washstands are of Lilliputian proportions and daily ablutions are a matter of difficulty, one recalls these tantalizing placards, and the thought of 300 bathrooms—or even only 100—is hardly to be borne. But in Barcelona one breathes an air of prosperity and well-being, and primitive village inns seem to be centuries away.

We made a pleasant excursion to Sitges one day. This small seaside town is about twenty-six miles from Barcelona and is on the Reus–Saragossa line. It is charmingly situated on the Mediterranean, which was dazzlingly blue on the day of our visit. We found much to interest us in the scenery during the latter part of the railway journey. We went through many olive-groves and vineyards, and the rocky gorges or hill-sides that we passed were clothed with huge aloes. At one small station where the train pulled up, and where we leaned out of the carriage window to try to catch a cooling breeze, an overwhelming rush of hot air laden with the smell of eucalyptus awaited us. Puzzled for a moment by the pungent scent, we looked around, and presently noticed that we were close to a forest of eucalyptus-trees.

Some little while before we reached Sitges the line ran near the coast, where rocky headlands alternated with sandy coves. The train went through many tunnels, and as we emerged from the gloom into the blazing sunlight we caught charming peeps of blue sea and yellow sand, which a few moments later were blotted out again by Stygian darkness. This continued until we arrived at the well-kept station of Sitges, with its gay flower-beds and its trim bushes. The town itself straggles down by narrow, winding streets, to the shore, along which runs a wide avenue of palm-trees. Here there were bathing-

establishments and cafés, though, as it was still rather early in the season, trade did not seem to be particularly brisk in either of these directions. Wishing to be right outside the town, however, we turned our steps north-eastwards, and passing the church, which has a fine position on a piece of rising ground, we scrambled over a rocky promontory and found ourselves in a secluded bay.

This perfect little cove was as though held in the arms of two rocky headlands which shut it off from the rest of the world, while landwards it was blocked by cliffs. The sea was calm as a mill-pond and the water in the bay absolutely transparent, the tiny ripples breaking on the shore being the only sign of movement. Complete silence reigned, and the cove seemed as remote as though it formed part of a desert island. It was midday, and perhaps all Catalonia was asleep. Whether this was so or not, we spent several hours in this our picnic-place, and delighted in its peace and solitude. With our heads in the shadow of a great rock and our feet buried in the hot baking sand, we rested to our heart's content, gazing at blue sea and sky and rejoicing in the sunshine. Once a fishing vessel, with outspread sail of a rich red-brown, passed just outside the bay. It sailed slowly southwards and disappeared from view. This was the only sign of life from the outer world. There were not even any birds to break the silence—indeed, one rarely hears the song of birds in Spain, apart from the nightingales and nightjars on the Alhambra hill.

> The whispering waves were half asleep,
> The clouds were gone to play,
> And on the bosom of the deep
> The smile of heaven lay.

At last we rose from our resting-place, and in due course found ourselves once more in the busy, bustling streets of Barcelona and part of its hurrying throng.

Montserrat

Spanish trains are notoriously slow, but eventually we covered the thirty miles' distance from Barcelona and stepped out at the little station of Monistrol. Here we crossed the platform and found the rack-and-pinion railway which takes right up the mountain-side to Montserrat. We had already caught a glimpse of this great naked mass of rock as we were coming along in the train, and had marvelled at its strangeness. It rises abruptly from the red-brown Catalonian plain, a grey, fantastic fortress, with towers, turrets, and pinnacles innumerable. One thinks at once of the Dolomites and strange shapes seen there, but this is more weird, more unearthly; it seems something apart from its surroundings, aloof, detached, a vast cathedral in a sun-baked plain. We took our seats in the little railway train and proceeded to a closer view. We crossed the Llobregat—a shrunken river in a deep ravine, like many Spanish streams—and commenced the steep ascent, first through olive-groves and vineyards; later these disappeared, and the train seemed to carve its way through the barren rock till finally we reached the narrow ledge on which the famous monastery stands.

On our way to the church we passed through the miniature village market, where the comely country women had all their produce displayed. For a few *reales* we bought great handfuls of raisins, which we were told were grown in the district. Every morning these Catalonian women trudge up the steep road from Monistrol, 2,300 feet, with their fruit, spending the day in the open square and walking down again at night.

We passed from the brilliancy of the noontide sun into the gloom and coolness of the church. The building was in utter darkness save for a blaze of light in the chancel,

MONTSERRAT

THE MONASTERY

which was almost blinding in its intensity. It came from the pyramid of candles, which lit up the jewelled figure of the Virgin, *La Santa Imagen*, above the altar. "Look! the Virgin's eyes are moving!" whispered my awestruck companion. It was doubtless the flashing of the jewels of which the eyes are made. The silent worshippers sat motionless, the candle flames flickered and leapt up, and they alone of all the company seemed pulsating and alive.

We stepped out again into the burning heat, and wandered by lonely paths along the mountain-side. Grey rocks outlined against an azure sky, evergreen shrubs clinging wherever they could get a foothold, and far below the vast Catalonian plain—a dried-up, red-brown world, stretching away as far as the eye could see. To the north the faint outline of the distant Pyrenees was seen, while eastwards we could trace the ravine of the Llobregat. A silver line on the horizon showed where the Mediterranean lay. We looked up and saw the gigantic masses of rock towering above us—weird, uncanny shapes, which threatened to overtopple and crush us poor, puny creatures.

How could human beings ever exist up there? And yet, for hundreds of years, hermits lived in the caves and crevices with which the mountain-side is riddled. As early as 800—even earlier, it is said—holy men found a shelter and a home in those unfriendly peaks. How live without food and water? Bread could be begged from the kindly village folk far below, perhaps, but water there is none, or almost none, for we found one tiny pool beneath an overhanging rock. For centuries men lived and died in these cliffs; it was holy ground, a "sacred mountain". One hermit spent a whole lifetime in a cave so low that he could not stand upright; he reached it by steps which he had cut in the naked rock.

In times of trouble the precious gold and silver vessels belonging to the Spanish churches were carried to Montserrat and hidden by holy men in crevices, there jealously guarded until it was safe to restore them to their rightful place again.

Montserrat, whose convent, still inhabited, is one of the oldest and most famous in Spain, is still a sacred spot. Thousands of pilgrims visit it every year, and newly married couples of Catalonia must attend service in the church in order that their union may be duly blessed. We wandered along the paths, dreaming of the holy men of old. The faint breeze caught the holm-oaks, " whose leaves tremble continually with prayers sent up to God ". Surely the hermits in their caves must have " leaned out of the gold bar of heaven ", looked down the precipice, and seen where the earth " spins like a fretful midge ".

For eleven hundred years this spot has been sought as a refuge, a sanctuary, an enchanted dwelling-place half-way between heaven and earth.

CHAPTER III

A CATALONIAN FARM

WHILE staying in Barcelona we had an opportunity of visiting a certain Catalonian farm in the district. On arrival at the little country station, which is some miles distant from the city, we found a *camión* awaiting us; this was a motor milk-cart which, twice a day, carries the milk from the farm to the railway station, where it is sent forward to Barcelona. A plank was placed in the front of the empty cart, the engine was cranked up, and we were soon whirling along a flat, dusty road on our way to La Granja.

The country through which we passed was of the agricultural and market-garden variety—that is to say, it was dull, monotonous, and uninteresting. A dead-level plain, with no knolls or rising ground to break the uniformity, no river, no sea, no mountains; a heavy, rather misty atmosphere which prohibited any hope of a distant view; and clouds of white, powdery dust on either side of the road: such was the setting of the picture.

In due course of time we were deposited inside the grounds of the farm, where we quickly found our way to the immense cow byre. This proved to be of such enormous dimensions that to inexperienced eyes it had the appearance of a small cathedral. The manager in charge, on seeing us, at once came forward to show us round and explain all the various details. Conversation was a little difficult, as our guide spoke chiefly in Catalan, or so we gathered,

judging from the unknown sounds of his words, and our own Spanish at that early stage of our tour was not in a very flourishing condition. However, a cow is always a cow whether it be a Catalonian one, or an English or Spanish, so we managed somehow or other.

The byre was in a state of scrupulous cleanliness, and this despite the fact that some dozens of animals were tethered in the stalls, all chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy and evidently enjoying the thought that they were housed in one of the most up-to-date dairy farms in Europe. The cool white and green tiles of the walls, the rounded corners where no dust could collect, the fly-strings hung up everywhere to catch the unwary clegg or mosquito —all contributed to give one an impression of a sweet and wholesome place, in which all lovers of hygiene would revel. Having duly admired everything here, we passed on into the dairy, which was just beyond. This, though a fairly large room, was small, indeed, compared with the one we had just left. Here we were shown the refrigerator and all the elaborate arrangements for cooling the milk. Here, again, everything was scrupulously clean and well ordered. Having heard many details of daily life in the dairy, the quantity of milk to be dealt with, the handling of it, the price obtained and so on, we were next taken to a small poultry-yard, to which access was obtained by a door at the back of the building. Cocks and hens rushed eagerly to meet us, hoping for a small contribution, and waited expectantly while we were made acquainted with their various merits.

The time had now come to say good-bye, as we felt we had encroached too much on the manager's working hours ; but no ! we must see the garden and the chicken-runs before there was any question of leaving. Our cicerone took us out by the principal door of the dairy, we crossed an open paved courtyard, and, turning to the left, through

a small gate we entered the garden. Masses of roses filled the beds, and the air was laden with their scent. Here, was a tiny plantation where chickens could shelter from the heat of the sun ; there, was a small pond for happy ducks to splash about in. There were rows of coops where broody hens were patiently sitting ; other mothers had already hatched out their young ones, and were gently leading them in the way they should go. In another part geese were stalking along in stately fashion, with heads in the air and long white necks stretched out to the full. In the shade under the lemon-trees were the rabbit hutches, and we paused before each rabbit in turn and admired a twitching nose or a pair of long soft ears. In this miniature wood there were pomegranate-trees, and on one of them our guide pointed out to us a small brown bird which was singing away lustily. This was the farm nightingale, who always had something to say for himself during a part, at least, of the twenty-four hours.

Now, surely, the time had come to leave, but once more we were checked, because—" You must meet my wife and daughters ". Only too pleased to have a peep inside a Spanish farmhouse, we were conducted across the courtyard and taken to the manager's home. We were then introduced to Madame and her two fair-haired daughters. The room which we had entered direct from the flagged court was a general living-room, and resembled in a slight degree a Yorkshire " house-place ". Other rooms opened off both to right and left—that to the right being the kitchen where preparations for the midday meal were being actively carried on. An open bureau was standing in one corner of the house-place, the room evidently serving both as best parlour and as farm office ; for later on, when the son of the house came in, he proceeded to sort over piles of papers in the desk and to arrange little heaps of money—the labourers' wages.

We were invited to sit down "*Sientese Usted!*"—how often do the hospitable Spaniards say this to strangers!), and presently great bowls of frothing milk were set before us and we were urged to drink as much as we could. Later we were taken into the kitchen, where various culinary details were explained to us. Then Madame asked if we would care to see her bedroom. This, in Spain, from one woman to another is a very great honour, and we appreciated the privilege very much. The stairs led up from the back of the house, and soon we were standing in a small ante-room where a tiny altar was fitted up, and over it hung a crucifix. We heard the history of this carved figure and we were told it was *muy antiguo*. Our hostess would not be satisfied until she had seen us write down on a piece of paper the age of this religious object. It was 555 years old, neither more nor less. Then we were free to pass through into her bedroom. Here was the *alcoba*, or alcove, with its large double bed, and opening off this room was another, also with its *alcoba*. This was the daughters' bedroom, for in Spain it is frequently the case that grown-up daughters sleep in a room opening off that of their parents.

The hour had now come when it was time for us to think of our long walk back to the station, but Madame, on hearing of our project, seemed amazed, and said, of course, her daughter would drive us there, as going on foot was out of the question. A dogcart presently appeared in the courtyard outside, and just as we were about to step in, our friend the manager came up laden with huge bouquets of roses, which he insisted on our accepting. Laden with lovely flowers, and feeling overwhelmed with kindness, we expressed our gratitude in such faltering terms as we were able, knowing too well that our feeble Spanish was quite unequal to the task imposed upon it. So ended a happy visit.

It is difficult in cold print to give an adequate idea of the charming courtesy and gracious manners of these simple folk. A true spirit of hospitality breathed from them, and, whether we were being shown a cow byre or a crucifix, there was a feeling of dignity—almost of majesty—in the air of which it was impossible to be unconscious. The dairy is reputed to be one of the most ultra-modern in Europe ; probably this is so, but what is equally true is that the manners of those in charge have their origin in the traditions of an old-world, long-established civilization.

CHAPTER IV

MADRID—EL ESCORIAL—PRADO MUSEUM

A MODERN city, nearly 2,400 feet above sea level and set in the midst of an arid, wind-swept plain—a city which, owing to its geographical position, is necessarily subject to intense heat and cold, and one, moreover, which is so new that it contains but few interesting relics of the past—such is the capital of Spain. It may be asked how it came about that a town so lacking in natural advantages should have been chosen to be the most important city in the country. The answer is that a gouty monarch discovered that his health was so greatly benefited by its dry, bracing climate that the idea occurred to him to make Madrid the metropolis. This is, at all events, the popular explanation of the riddle. The Emperor Charles V (Charles I of Spain) made a visit here in 1524, when he was recovering from an illness; he became enamoured of the place, and finally in 1532 he chose it as his residence, though he never actually carried into effect his wish that it should be the capital. It was left to his son, Philip II, in the year 1560, to declare Madrid definitely the *única corte* (only court) and the capital of *Las Españas*.

Though these two royal names are always mentioned in connexion with the springing into prominence of the city, it must not be supposed that Madrid is devoid of earlier history. Her roots are in the past, and even in the tenth century she was a walled and fortified town,

and acted as an outpost for the defence of Toledo, the stronghold of the Moors, against possible attacks from an onrush of northern Christians. During the centuries that followed, " Madjrit ", or " Madrit ", played her part in the affairs of the country and grew in size and importance, despite various vicissitudes. Ferdinand and Isabella (*los Reyes Católicos*) often visited Madrid, which shared in the general prosperity during this splendid reign. It was their grandchild, Charles V, who conceived the idea of making it the capital of United Spain. It must be remembered that in this monarch's time the climate of Madrid was much more equable than it is at the present day; this was due to the fact that there were large forests in the plains surrounding the city, which both served to break the force of the cold winds and to give shade to the land. When Philip brought his Court and his retinue here in 1560 he caused these forests to be cut down in order to provide wood for the building of the many additional houses required. During Philip's reign the town was enlarged and improved in many ways, but it was not till the eighteenth century that it began to rank as a first-class city.

At the present day it strikes one as a town of immense spaces, of wide streets and avenues, of many squares, handsome buildings, and elaborate monuments. In spite of its up-to-date aspect, however, its fashionable shops, its public parks, its busy traffic and air of vitality, it is not, strangely enough, an attractive city, and to those who happen to come here direct from Barcelona the contrast between the two rivals is very marked. The Catalonian capital is a delightful spot to visit, and one which makes the pleasantest of impressions on the stranger; but here one is conscious of something aloof and chilling in the general atmosphere, something which leaves the traveller cold and untouched. Possibly a prolonged stay

is necessary before one can learn to appreciate the character of Madrid, before one can discover those picturesque nooks and quaint bits of architecture which some enthusiastic writers promise us. During a short visit, however, one sees none of these things, and it is difficult to avoid a feeling of disappointment.

Perhaps the peculiar climate of the city may be partly the cause of the unfavourable impression which one receives. The weather was certainly a trial during our visit, though we may have been unfortunate in this respect. The skies were leaden and overcast, we never saw the sun, and yet the heat was so oppressive that one's energies were reduced to zero—the heat during the day that is, for when early evening came a cold wind sprang up that made one's thoughts turn instantly to wraps. "For Heaven's sake take something warm to put on in the evenings," was the earnest advice of a medical friend, a much-travelled man, when we were telling him of our prospective sojourn in the Spanish capital. Through the nights, too—the long nights of Madrid when sleep is impossible owing to the noise outside—the cold is noticeable for a brief space before the dawn of the hot, parching day. It is at moments like these that we remember the nearness of Madrid to the Guadarrama Mountains. The noises of the night! The days are quiet enough, and one has no reason to complain; but by five or six o'clock the traffic and excitement have begun, and for the next eleven hours there is no peace. It is not a question of the commotion, the ceaseless conversation, the twanging of musical instruments, continuing till the "early hours" of the morning, for it is the late hours before there is any hope of respite. Madrid seems to outdo all other Spanish cities in this respect, and it is small wonder if the traveller, after a while, begins to decide that there are other important towns which should be claiming his attention.

One should not judge a place, of course, from a short visit, yet however brief one's stay here, it is difficult not to make comparisons with some other Continental capitals. We think of Amsterdam, with its quaint streets ; of Munich, the bizarre capital of Bavaria, with its green, rushing river ; of Berne, with its fine view of snow-capped peaks ; of Rome, with its clear sunset skies and velvety air ; of Paris—and it must be admitted that Madrid does not stand high in the list. Yet there is one building in this metropolis which makes us ready to forgive all its defects—a building whose treasures no traveller must omit to see, and one in which our joy may be complete—but the glories of the Prado Museum will be alluded to later on. In this famous picture gallery and in the *Armería* (the Armoury) one can find all the beauty and the history which we may search for in vain in the town itself.

The wonderful collection of armour in the *Armería* was partly brought together by Charles V, who took a great interest in all warlike matters, and his son, Philip II, treasured his father's exhibits and added largely to them. Philip caused a fine building to be erected to house the collection, but this was burned down in 1884 and the present museum was built on the site. Those who take pleasure in comparing the different kinds of armour worn in jousts and in warfare will find here one of the best opportunities for study afforded them in Europe.

A third important museum must be mentioned. This is the *Palacio de la Biblioteca y Museos Nacionales*, or the National Museums as we may call it for short. The building is in the *Paseo de Recoletos*, and contains a vast collection of precious objects, housed under various headings as follows : The National Library, the Archæological Museum, the National Archives, and the Museum of Modern Art.

To some people one of the chief attractions of Madrid

is the bull fight, for it is here that the national sport reaches its height. The huge *Plaza de Toros* (Bull Ring) is said to accommodate 14,000 persons. It is situated near the *Calle de Alcalá*, and is not far from the *Buen Retiro*. This well-known street and the equally well-known park are two of the principal sights of the city. The *Calle de Alcalá* begins at the *Puerta del Sol*, that pivot on which the life of Madrid turns, and the starting-point for no less than ten streets. The Gate of the Sun, as it is called, occupies a piece of rising ground, and contains amongst other massive buildings the important *Ministerio de la Gobernación* (Ministry of the Interior). If we begin our peregrinations at this large modern *plaza*, with its hum of traffic—the centre of the spider's web, if we may call it so—and walk eastwards with a touch of north, we follow the long *Calle de Alcalá*, a wide handsome street with many fashionable shops. It is along here that the procession of carriages and motor-cars begins to move in the early hours of the evening when Madrid has shaken off its afternoon slumber and is brightening up.

The first large open space that our promenade brings us to is the *Plaza de Cibeles*, with its fountain of the same name in the centre. Here we may either turn off to the right and wander along the pleasant *Salón del Prado*, or keep straight on till we reach the *Plaza de la Independencia*, where we shall find one of the principal entrances to the *Buen Retiro*. This *Parque de Madrid* is a large public garden and a very popular resort of the Madrilenos. Here one may enjoy rest and quiet from the throng of traffic outside. The park contains an artificial lake (*Estanque Grande*), a fine sheet of water, and numerous ponds and fountains. There are avenues and many shady corners, but the trees have a melancholy air and look parched and thirsty. Flowers there are none—or almost none, for we found one small but attractive garden laid out with

formal beds. It was curious to watch the trees and shrubs being watered. The whole park is net-worked with tiny sluices, and these are opened at stated times, and portions of the ground are flooded with the life-giving water. The streamlets rush madly hither and thither, but it seems long before the baked earth can be persuaded to swallow its dose. Every tree or shrub has a circular trench dug round it to contain the water, and where there is no such trench the soil is absolutely dry and crumbling, and no vestige of weed, no tiniest blade of grass, can find existence.

In the well-planted *Paseo del Prado* we frequently stopped to watch the watering or washing of the palms and shrubs, each with its sunken trough—indeed, the washing of trees and streets is quite an interesting sight in Madrid. One constantly sees the great hose-pipes at work, and one has to pick one's way warily across streams of water. In this way the town is kept exceedingly clean and the dust reduced as far as possible. Another feature of Madrid is the presence of the water-sellers—a delightfully old-world custom, which seems singularly incongruous in an up-to-date city. Théophile Gautier could not get over his surprise at the amount of water the Madrilenos drank, and jokingly remarks about the insignificant river, "the poor Manzanares", "I should just like to see what sort of a figure any other river would cut in a town parched up by the same thirst".

The thirst for water is only equalled by the thirst for lottery tickets, and these two sets of street-vendors do a brisk trade. The water-sellers are often women or little girls, and one hears their musical cry, "*Agua, agua, quién quiere agua?*" as they approach with their great earthen jars. We were interested in watching a little water-vendor one sultry day as we rested on a seat in the *Paseo del Prado*. She was selling glass after glass and having a thoroughly busy time, yet she never failed to rinse out

the tumbler afresh for every new customer, thus wasting much of the precious water. One sees this same scrupulousness again and again in Spain, either in the streets or at wayside stations, where the *aguadores* pace up and down calling out, "*Agua, agua fresca*".

In Gautier's time fashionable life thronged the *Salón del Prado* in the evenings, and it was the rendezvous of all the *beau monde*. Since his day, however, the tide has shifted, and the centre of fashion is now in the *Calle de Alcalá*, the *Paseo de Recoletos*, and its continuation, the *Paseo de la Castellana*. The *Paseo de Recoletos* takes off to the left from the *Plaza de Cibeles* (thus running almost due north), while the *Salón del Prado* takes off to the right, as has been said previously.

From the *Paseo del Prado* and near the statue of Murillo we enter the Botanic Gardens. We visited these one day, but searched in vain for their beauty. In Madrid one has the feeling that in spite of the lavish use of water the desert places have encroached even on the town itself. In the *Salón del Prado* we come upon a monument of tragic significance. This is an obelisk erected to commemorate the massacre of the victims of *El Dos de Mayo*. On May 2, 1808, the Madrilenos attempted to rise against their French oppressors, and a holocaust of citizens on this very spot was the result. In the Prado Museum, close by, hangs Goya's terribly vivid canvas of "El Dos de Mayo", a picture one would almost wish not to have seen, so haunting is it in its realism.

Of the various great men of whom we think when we are in Madrid the three artists Velasquez, Goya, and El Greco come uppermost. Of Velasquez we shall speak later. El Greco, whose real name was Domenico Theotocúpoli, is best studied at Toledo, where he passed part of his life. A number of his pictures hang in the Prado, however, and from these one may obtain some idea of the

style of this visionary painter, this mystic, this creator of pale, unhappy wraiths who seem to be writhing under the stress of all their mental agonies. Goya is well represented in the Prado; Goya, the merciless satirist, the man of iron nerves who recoiled from no horror, who spares us nothing, and who brings into startling reality everything that he touches.

Of the literary men who were connected with Madrid the name of Cervantes is pre-eminent. The delightful author of *Don Quixote* spent much of his life here, and as he often shifted his quarters, several streets are associated with his name. If his great masterpiece was "engendered in a prison", it was finished when he was moving about from place to place in Madrid.

To come much nearer home, it is interesting to recall that the Prince of Wales, Charles Stuart, and his friend, the Duke of Buckingham, paid a visit to Madrid in the year 1623 with the object of furthering the marriage of the heir-apparent with the Infanta Maria. The visit was not a great success, however; the Duke was very unpopular, and on one occasion the young Prince gave great offence by jumping over a wall of the palace garden in order to talk to the Infanta, who was alone. This was a terrible breach of etiquette, and the Princess rushed away from him screaming with fear. Eventually, to the joy of the English people, the marriage negotiations were broken off, and later "Baby Charles" found a bride at the French Court. Those familiar with Portsmouth will remember the inscription which commemorates the safe return of the Prince. Beneath a bust of Charles we read the following words:—

After his travels through all France into Spain, and having passed very many dangers, both by sea and land, he arrived here the 5th day of October, 1623.

The present Royal Palace, a magnificent eighteenth-century structure built on the site of the old *Alcázar*, is situated above the valley of the Manzanares, towards which the extensive gardens slope down. The Palace is west of the *Puerta del Sol*, and may be approached by the *Calle del Arenal*, one of the ten radiating streets.

Let us now leave the precincts of the Prado and follow the stream of leisurely pedestrians who are sauntering up towards the Gate of the Sun. We may either reach it by the now familiar *Calle de Alcalá*, or by the equally fashionable *Carrera de San Jerónimo* with its fine shops. We meet a counter-stream of people coming down the *calle*, and have ample opportunity for observation. The mantillas worn by the women here are rather different from those worn at Seville, and the effect is not quite so becoming; the thinnest of black veils rests on the hair and falls right over the face—a convenient custom in a town where excessive staring is the order of the day. Every lady carries a fan as a matter of course, but parasols are conspicuous by their absence. The traffic consists of tram-cars, motor-cars, and carriages, with which ox-carts and country vehicles, or a long line of mules, mingle.

Having duly arrived at the *Puerta del Sol*, we may almost say that we are in the centre of the Iberian Peninsula, for as Madrid is, roughly speaking, equidistant from the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, and the Bay of Biscay, so is the Gate of the Sun in the heart of the city. Here we may linger, looking both towards the east and the west—a fitting point from which to regard the greatness of *España*.

The Escorial

Of the two excursions from Madrid which most travellers make—the one to Toledo, an ancient town occupying a striking position above the Tagus, the other to the Escorial

—mention will only be made of the latter. The Monastery of El Escorial, one of the most extraordinary buildings in existence, is the outcome of the fanatical brain of Philip II, the king who was almost a monk. This intensely religious personage was deeply impressed by the fact that his father, Charles V, renounced his Empire in order to spend his latter years in a cell. Add to this that Philip's conscience suffered as a result of his soldiers having to destroy, at the battle of St. Quentin, a church dedicated to St. Lawrence, a martyr of Spanish birth, and we have an inkling into the thoughts which called into being the Escorial. Philip had promised his father that he would erect a mausoleum for the imperial remains, and, further, he vowed that he would make reparation to St. Lawrence by founding a convent ; these two ideas he now decided to combine by building a Monastery-Palace, where he could spend much time himself in religious devotions.

Two years were spent in looking for a suitable site, solitude and nearness to the capital being equally desired ; but Philip finally selected the vicinity of Escorial, a village on a spur of the Guadarramas, some thirty miles distant from Madrid, and in 1563 the first stone was laid. The plan of the building is a gridiron, the instrument on which the saint was martyred, the Royal Palace which projects towards the east being the handle. The fabric is of granite, and seems to grow out of the surrounding hill-side ; it is difficult to imagine anything more lonely or strange than this huge building set in the midst of a desolate land, the gloomy outcome of a gloomy brain.

Two stories are told of Philip which, whether they are literally true or not, at least serve to throw some light on this stern, stoical character who was unmoved alike by success or defeat. When news was brought to him of a great victory over the Turks at Lepanto, he was praying in the church at the Escorial ; but he would allow nothing

to interrupt his devotions, and continued praying as though no messenger had arrived. The other story is that he was sitting at his desk one day in the Escorial when someone hurried in to announce the destruction of the "invincible Armada". Not a muscle of the monarch's face moved. "Thank God I have sufficient money to fit out another fleet," was all he said.

Well known as are Gautier's views on the Escorial, some of them may perhaps be quoted here, giving as they do a series of vivid impressions. He calls it a Leviathan of architecture, and says it must certainly be, after the Pyramids, the biggest mass of granite on earth. He describes the chill which struck his heart as he entered the courtyard. "You feel that everything is at an end, and that all joy is dead for you." In spite of the heat outside you feel that life will never again be able to warm the blood in your veins, which has become colder than the blood of a viper. He recounts his deadly sensations in the *Panteón*, where he saw the tombs of the Kings, and finally, having escaped from this "architectural nightmare" into the fresh air, he advises those who imagine they suffer from boredom to spend three or four days in the Escorial and there they will learn what is real *ennui*! So writes the entertaining Frenchman!

The Prado Museum

A small group of ardent worshippers stood on the threshold of the Prado Museum at 10 a.m. Unable to check our enthusiasm any longer, we were even there a while before the time of opening, and, in company with a few others, we waited eagerly for the appointed hour. When at last a glum individual began to unlock and push back the great folding doors everyone stepped forward; but we were waved sternly away by Officialdom, who,

muttering words to the effect that we might at least give him time to spread out the doormat, began to unroll that formidable barrier between us and Velasquez. Everything is on a large scale in Madrid, and the mat seemed to be colossal; but after we had stood a moment in meek submission the great man was pleased to let us enter.

The Prado Museum is vast in extent and rich in the world's masterpieces, many schools of painting being represented. Here is to be seen the best collection—the only collection, in fact—of Velasquez's pictures, for in no other city or country can the master's works be easily studied. The finest of these are in Madrid, and a visit to this not very attractive city is essential if we wish to see the genius of the artist at its height. Those who have already come under Velasquez's spell elsewhere will find in the Prado Museum a unique opportunity for enjoying the *chefs d'œuvre* of one who is not only Spain's most famous painter, but who is generally acknowledged to be one of the greatest painters of the seventeenth century.

Diego de Silva y Velasquez was born at Seville in June 1599. His mother, Gerónima Velasquez, was an Andalusian of noble birth, while his father, Juan de Silva, came of an influential Portuguese family. Juan himself was born in Seville, his parents having come thither from Oporto, in North Portugal. It has been suggested by writers of authority (A. Calvert and C. Hartley in their book, *Velasquez*) that the two strains in Velasquez, the Portuguese and the Andalusian (calm self-control on the one hand, vivacity on the other), have helped to give his art that perfect balance for which it is conspicuous. Child of gay Seville as he was, half Portuguese, and wholly hidalgo by birth, Velasquez combines all the best qualities of two differing peoples, and in his personality we see mingled reserve and exuberance, sweetness and strength.

Fortune favoured the painter almost from the first.

True, his earliest master, Herrera, was antipathetic to him, but he soon left his studio and went to that of Pacheco —an artist who became Velasquez's father-in-law and biographer, and was his friend through life. Thenceforward things went well with the young painter. Partly owing to Pacheco's untiring efforts, the new king, Philip IV, became interested in Velasquez's pictures, and as a result of this the artist was bidden to come to Madrid. This was the beginning of a warm friendship between monarch and painter, between patron and servant, which lasted for thirty-six long years. The young Philip was himself a keen art-lover, and he welcomed an opportunity of extending his patronage to a brilliant beginner whose portraits showed such remarkable promise.

We see Velasquez, therefore, in his early twenties, leaving Seville for ever, and with his wife, his family, his father-in-law, travelling to Madrid, which henceforth was to become his home. The destinies of the two young men, the King and the Court painter, were to be linked up together as they journeyed through life, and their names came to be almost inseparable. Velasquez was appointed to one royal post after another—Usher of the Chamber, Officer of the Wardrobe, Grand Purveyor of the Palace, and so on—till much of his time was spent in duties pertaining to the Court. Perhaps to this we may in part ascribe the fact that he was not a prolific painter, experts considering the total number of his existing pictures to be about one hundred.

Highly individualized, Velasquez was but slightly influenced by other painters with whom he came in contact. His friendship with Rubens, who made a prolonged visit to the Spanish capital in 1628, his two trips to Italy and his acquaintance with the art there, made comparatively small difference to this giant amongst men, who followed his own course, untroubled by foreign schools of thought.

Of the master's great works in the Prado it is not possible to mention more than a few, and as an adequate description of even these few is an impossible task, the reader is recommended to journey to Madrid, where he may see for himself all their satisfying splendour. One of Velasquez's early masterpieces, "Los Borrachos," was painted while he was still under the influence of Sevillian Art; in that city tavern pictures (called *bodegones*, from *bodegón*, a tavern) were much in vogue, and in his youth Velasquez had painted several canvases in this popular style. "Los Borrachos," translated as "The Topers," or "The Revellers," is a work of astounding vitality and strength. In it we see the young god Bacchus, who reigns supreme amongst his satellites, his throne a wine-cask, crowning an aspirant to the Bacchanalian order with a garland of vine leaves. Close at hand a seasoned reveller holds up with glee a gleaming bowl of wine, ready to initiate the novice, who kneels submissively. Four other men, one of whom is evidently making some ribald joke, crowd round in eager excitement. On the other side of the young god, or peasant, are two more merrymakers, both crowned with vine leaves, of whom one, who is in shadow, is leaning on a wine-jar, while the other holds up a wineglass of lovely shape. The subject is a parody of a Bacchanalian rite, and the figures are all of the peasant type. The faces of the bronzed old men are extraordinarily real, and the whole picture teems with life and merriment and sparkling vivacity. The spectator is captivated by its compelling force, and has no choice but to stand and look.

A much later work, "The Surrender of Breda", "the greatest historical picture in the world", has this same irresistible power. It is a very large canvas, and contains a number of figures, but attention is focused on the two principal men who occupy a central position. These are

the Marquis of Spinola and Justin of Nassau, victor and vanquished; not that their names matter greatly,—what interests us is the art with which their emotions are portrayed. When has a more gracious, courteous, or noble conqueror been seen on canvas? The vanquished humbly presents the keys of Breda to the victorious general, who, for his part, receives them in a spirit of dignity, of sympathy, and of grace which has surely never been equalled. This picture was intended, in company with others, as a mural decoration for the new palace of the *Buen Retiro*. The artist painted it before he was forty—that is, in the period between his two visits to Italy—and it is considered to be the masterpiece of his middle life. In it there is evidence of some slight Italian influence, Velasquez having been greatly struck by the works of certain Venetian painters, notably Titian, Veronese, and Tintoretto. "The Surrender of Breda" is known also as "Las Lanzas" ("The Lances"), owing to the number of perpendicular lances seen on the right-hand side of the picture—a striking feature of the superb composition.

Of all the magnificent portraits of Philip IV it is not possible to speak; we see the monarch boyish, mature, or middle-aged, but always of kingly bearing and full of dignity. Those long features, that fair colouring, become very familiar to the Prado visitor, and the personages about Philip's Court hardly less so. Here are the pathetic dwarfs and *crétins* with whom Royalty was wont to surround itself; here also the imposing dukes or others who enjoyed the King's favour at the moment. We see works of art created from the likenesses of people who, insignificant in themselves, yet served to call forth all the genius of a master-mind. Velasquez could find ample inspiration in any face or figure which, as Court painter, a servant of the King, he was called upon to paint. So life-like are these portraits that they seem to live, move,

and have their being. Let us look at one of them in more detail (see frontispiece).

This is catalogued in the Prado collection as "La Infanta Doña Maria Teresa de Austria," and she was the daughter of Philip IV. It must be mentioned, however, that there is some controversy about the title of the picture, certain experts believing it to be the Infanta Dona Margarita, the half-sister of Maria Teresa. (Philip IV was twice married, and had children by both wives.) But into this vexed question there is no need to enter. What we see before us is the portrait of a little maid who has charmed men's hearts throughout the years, and will continue to charm them as long as mankind remains susceptible to beauty and to art. She looks out of the canvas with royal dignity, yet with all the appealing qualities of childhood. Her fair hair stands out stiffly from her head, as does her grotesquely hooped dress from her body; but the spectator feels nothing incongruous in her appearance, and accepts the peculiar fashions as entirely natural. In one hand this dainty little person holds a large lace handkerchief and in the other a rose. The dress—a miracle of painting—is of a lovely silver and pink, deepening to scarlet, while behind we see looped back a great red curtain. Nothing remarkable in all this, one may say, but what of the art which makes of all these details a perfect whole? The harmonious colouring, the play of light and shade, the atmosphere, the life with which this picture is imbued, make it a sheer delight, an abiding joy.

Now let us turn to "Las Meninas" ("The Maids of Honour"), perhaps the greatest picture of all the wonderful works in the Sala de Velasquez. This is the masterpiece of the painter's life, when his genius had reached its full maturity. Here is a subject entirely after the master's heart, and the story goes that the idea for it came to him accidentally. It is suggested that Velasquez was one day

painting Philip's portrait when the little Infanta with her maids of honours, her dwarfs, and her dog ran into the room. The artist, or the King, was struck with the picturesque grouping, and it was decided to make a picture of it. Whether there is any truth in this suggestion it is impossible to say, but the fact remains that there is a feeling in the canvas of something absolutely natural and spontaneous. We catch a glimpse of real life and see living people in the midst of their usual surroundings, nothing seems to have been prearranged—there lies the consummate art. In the centre of the scene stands the little princess, attended on either side by a maid of honour, one of whom is kneeling to offer something to her. Two dwarfs and a large mastiff dog are in the foreground on the right, while in the shadow on the left, the painter, brush and palette in hand, stands working before a huge easel. The artist is supposed to be looking out of the canvas towards the King and Queen, whose reflexions are seen in miniature in a mirror at the back of the picture. There are three other subordinate figures, one of whom is silhouetted against the bright light of an open doorway at the far end of the room. One may enumerate the various figures in the group; but how describe the fascination which the canvas exercises over the minds of all who see it? Those subtle lights and shades, the marvellous atmosphere, the modelling of all those gracious figures, the tenderness of the maids of honour towards their royal charge—all these things can only be realized by a personal study of the picture. One returns to it again and again with ever-increasing pleasure, trying to fathom the secret of its charm, or giving oneself up to the enjoyment of its beauty.

CHAPTER V

SEVILLE

THE Guadalquivir—a broad, slow-moving, tawny stream with ocean steamboats resting on its shores; narrow streets full of movement and animation; flat-topped, whitewashed houses with perennial washing hanging out on the roof, where cocks and hens keep company with the chimney-pots; enchanting gardens, a palace or two, a gigantic cathedral with a Moorish tower at its side; a sun which always shines, a sky which never clouds: such is *Sevilla*.

Amongst so many delights and novelties it is difficult to know on which to concentrate: the life of the streets and town, the famous buildings, the gardens and *patios*, or the general atmosphere of something southern and Oriental which captivates the stranger by its utter unlikeness to other cities of his acquaintance.

The cathedral, perhaps, is the "lion" which most travellers visit first. This "largest Gothic church in the world" impresses one by its immense size and by the wealth of its treasures. The recollection of the richness in Milan Cathedral fades into nothingness here as one is shown tombs, pictures, vestments, jewelled crowns for the Virgin, gold, silver, and precious stones till one is almost surfeited. The *Sacristia* alone contains art treasures which would fill a small museum, and in the room near by the splendid embroidered vestments, dating from the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries, are worth a visit in

themselves. There are real works of art in the *Sacristia*, objects to pore over and to study, if an over-zealous custodian could be persuaded not to hurry on the stranger to the next part of the building. There is a lovely silver dish by the Italian artist, Benvenuto Cellini, one or two enamelled triptyches (of which one is fourteenth-century work) of great beauty, and many other treasures too numerous to mention.

The cathedral itself is overwhelming in its vastness. We had an opportunity of judging of its length when we were standing close to the west entrance ; a door opened at the far end of the aisle, lighting the gloom with a flood of sunshine, and a figure appeared in the doorway. At that moment we realized the size of the building more vividly than if we had measured it with a foot-rule. The piers are mammoth in their proportions, and the number of side-chapels with their works of art is baffling. One of the most interesting pictures is that in the *Capilla del Baptisterio*. It represents "St. Anthony of Padua's Vision of the Holy Child," and in it we see Murillo at his best. The painter shows us a beautiful figure of a kneeling monk, who looks up in rapt adoration at the vision of the Christ Child. The colouring and light and shade of the picture are exquisite, and combined with its charm and sweetness there is a deeper feeling in it than we sometimes find in the pictures of this Andalusian artist.

Of the many tombs which the cathedral contains it is only possible to mention a few. The most notable, of course, is that of Christopher Columbus, which is in the south transept. The remains of the great traveller are enclosed inside a sarcophagus, which is supported by four bronze figures, representing Castile, Aragon, Leon, and Navarre. The mortal remains of Columbus rival those of the Cid in their wanderings. In the first instance the body of this "much-travelled man" rested in the town

in which he died, Valladolid; some three years later (1509) the remains were removed to the church of a Carthusian convent in Triana, a suburb of Seville. Later, again (in 1540), they were taken to Santo Domingo in Haiti, and from 1796–1898 they lay in the cathedral at Havana. Since 1898, when Cuba was lost to Spain, the remains have lain at peace in Seville Cathedral.

Fernando Colón, the son of the great explorer, is buried in the nave near the *Puerta Mayor*, and an engraved tablet on the pavement marks the spot. In the *Capilla Real*, or Royal Chapel, which projects slightly from the east end of the cathedral, are the tombs of various monarchs and others. Alphonso the Learned (*el Sabio*), who died in 1284, is buried here, and here also lies the body of San Fernando, King of Spain, who died in 1252. The tomb of this greatly revered saint is a silver casket decorated with gold medallions. A few steps lead down to the *Panteón*, where are shown the coffins of Pedro the Cruel and his morganatic wife, María de Padilla.

The lovely Court of the Oranges (*Patio de los Naranjos*) is immediately to the north of the cathedral, and with its old fountain in the centre and its fruit-laden orange-trees round about, it is a truly charming spot. The Moorish *Puerta del Perdón*, with its horseshoe arch, forms a fitting entrance to the *Patio*.

Adjoining the cathedral is the beautiful *Giralda*, which seems to be the very soul of Seville. This Moorish prayer-tower was erected in the twelfth century, and, though it has suffered somewhat from later additions and alterations, it is still a building of rare beauty. The colour of the brickwork is a pale pink, and in the evening light this takes on a lovely glow. The ascent of the tower is curious as we go up, not by steps, but by a series of inclined planes—a kind of ramp which leads up and up by gradual stages till we reach the summit. One can easily believe the

story that a man once made the ascent on horseback. The enormous bronze bells at the top attracted our notice; but what we found even more interesting was the extensive view. The whole city was spread out beneath us, while farther away was the great wide plain. We gazed down on narrow streets and countless whitewashed houses. Looking down on these Spanish streets from some high tower, as we so often did, and watching the life of the town ebb to and fro, one thinks instinctively of rocky channels at the coast. The swing of the tide this way or that in the creeks, the movements of busy creatures, the hurrying and the tranquillity combined—all this is pictured for us on land as it is through transparent waters by the sea.

Half-Eastern as Seville is, it is not surprising that the roofs of the houses play an important part in domestic life. As in Swiss *châlets* in the land of snow, where the wide veranda is the storehouse, the play place, the drying-ground of the family, so here in this land of sunshine the flat roof forms the garden, the poultry run, the drying-green, and the nursery of the household. Here conversation would go on from one roof to another, intervening spaces being no deterrent to eloquence. Here pots of carnations bloomed, the red carnations which one sees stuck jauntily behind the ears of the tobacco girls.

Through that maze of tortuous streets we threaded our way one morning to the *Museo Provincial*, not really far in point of distance, certainly, but rather a case of "twist ye, twine ye" endlessly. Even a cursory glance at the map of Seville gives one an idea of the network of lanes of which the city is composed. No occasion to lament Haussmannism here! The street *par excellence* is the *Calle de las Sierpes*; this opens off the *Plaza de la Constitución*, and is reserved for pedestrians only. Here one is protected from the fierce sunshine by the awnings (*toldos*), which are stretched from roof to roof, the whole length of

SEVILLE

THE GIRALDA

the street being covered by them. Here pedestrians flock to and fro, frequenting the cafés and shops with which the *calle* is lined.

The fashionable time for Sevillian traffic is between five o'clock and six o'clock in the evening. Then the direct rays of the sun are less formidable, though the actual heat seems just as great. Towards these hours a procession of small carriages begins to stream out to the fashionable promenade near the river, the *Paseo de las Delicias*. *Carruaje* after *carruaje* passes and one sees the flutter of many fans. Beautiful as the Sevillian women are, with their dark colouring and their smooth skins, their looks are enhanced by the national way of dressing, which seems in perfect harmony with face and figure. The black dress, the piled-up mass of black hair crowned by a high tortoise-shell comb, over which falls a delicate black lace mantilla —all combine to make a pleasing picture; moreover, when one sees these women walking in the street, their gliding movements and graceful carriage form no small part of their charm.

Seville is rich in gardens and well-planted squares. The *Paseo de Catalina de Rivera* had many sub-tropical trees and shrubs, and the high brick wall which separates it from the gardens of the *Alcázar* was festooned with lovely creepers. Here masses of purple bougainvillæa and blue plumbago grew, while farther on orange-coloured abutilon and yellow and pink hoya ran riot up the wall. Many pomegranate-trees were flowering, some with double scarlet blooms, other with single. Roses and red geraniums flourished in profusion, while jets of water everywhere gave a delicious freshness to the air.

The *patios* of the private houses in Seville add greatly to the charm of some of the streets. One gets delightful peeps into these arcaded courtyards in passing; in a flash one sees the sparkling fountain in the centre, encircled

with its row of ferns or small palms in pots, and the suggestion of coolness, greenness, and seclusion in this burning heat is singularly satisfying.

The *Alcázar*, or Palace, of the Moorish Kings is a fascinating place, in spite of unsatisfactory alterations which have taken place at various times. Many of the glazed tiles are the original Moorish ones, and the colours—yellow, green, or chocolate—are beautiful. We wandered from *sala* to *patio*, from *patio* to *sala*, admiring the marble columns, the delicate horseshoe arches, the slender windows, or the *azulejos* dados. Tragedies have played their part in this lovely palace, and within its walls crimes have been committed by an all-powerful king. Here Don Pedro the Cruel held undisputed sway for many years; he murdered his brother-in-law in the *Patio de las Muñecas* (Court of the Dolls), and a wealthy Moor who came to him for advice, and who was unwise enough to bring with him jewels of priceless value, suffered a like fate. But other events of a more cheerful nature also took place here. The Emperor Charles V (son of Philip the Handsome and "Mad Joan"—Joanna la Loca) was married to Isabella of Portugal in the splendid Hall of the Ambassadors, perhaps the finest room of all.

We can almost forgive Carlos Quinto (as the Emperor is called in Spain) his staring palace on the Alhambra hill and all his other "improvements", when we visit the exquisite *Alcázar* gardens which he caused to be laid out. We enter them through the *Patio de las Banderas*, where Pedro the Cruel used to sit in judgment on delinquents. Presently we reach a wide terrace with a large tank of water; over the house wall which shuts off this part of the garden from the town outside a mass of purple bougainvillæa was hanging down in "trailing clouds of glory", a vivid splash of colour to delight the eye.

At the farther end of this terrace a short flight of steps

leads down to the extensive gardens below. At first we walked tentatively, as the guide-book warns its readers to beware of hidden fountains which suddenly spurt up and drench the stranger. However, these have probably long been done away with—at all events we saw nothing of them. The gardens are beautiful in the extreme ; there seems to be no limit to their variety, and one can wander for long and yet still find something fresh at every turn. Water is everywhere—endless tanks, fountains, rivulets and runnels keep the air cool and fresh. One may saunter at will in this well-watered garden and choose the special spot which is most in keeping with one's mood.

Here are clipped myrtle hedges and trim borders, and the sandy paths are scattered with the lovely crimson flowers dropped from the Australian Flame Tree, which presides over this small but charming pleasance. After feasting on the beauty here one wanders away to the wilder part ; here is a veritable wilderness where scarlet poppies mingle with the tangled grass. Palms and orange-trees are here, and the golden fruit lies half-buried amongst weeds and flowers. Farther away are huge eucalyptus-trees and india-rubber plants and the tree of heaven, while farther still we find feathery pepper-trees with their tiny scarlet berries, and robinias. Here flourishes a Japanese persimmon, with ovate leaves and whitish-green flowers. Sub-tropical trees grow in profusion, and the air is filled with delicious scents. There are blue-tiled seats which invite one to linger and listen to the tinkling of the fountains, or to watch the goldfish swimming in the still waters of the tanks. Old walls are covered with abutilon, wisteria, and heliotrope ; beauty runs riot everywhere.

Seville gave birth to two of Spain's most famous painters, Velasquez and Murillo. As a visit to Madrid is necessary in order to see the finest collection of Velasquez's works,

so we must sojourn at Seville if we wish to see Murillo at his best. This is not to say that the Prado does not also contain many of his pictures, but the Andalusian artist is a child of the south, and here one finds it easier to be on sympathetic terms with him. He is, of course, above all a painter of religious subjects, and his Adorations, Saints, and Immaculate Conceptions are full of a grace and sweetness which touch the heart in spite of the lack of other qualities of which one is conscious. It must be remembered, too, that we owe Murillo a debt in that he spares us, for the most part, all the tortures and horrors in which so many of the Spanish painters revel. The horrible seems to have a peculiar fascination for Spaniards, and if we often have reason to complain of an excess of realism in their art, we should all the more welcome Murillo as a joyous painter who gives us, as it were, a temporary respite.

Murillo was born at Seville in 1617 and spent much of his life here. While he was engaged in painting a high-altar piece, "The Betrothal of St. Catherine", at the church of a Capuchin convent in Cádiz, he fell from the scaffolding, and not long after he died (1682) at Seville as a result of the fall. "The Betrothal of St. Catherine" was his last picture, and he had almost finished it when the accident occurred. The *Museo Provincial* contains some of the finest works of this popular painter, and not only here, but elsewhere in Seville, in the Cathedral, in the Church of La Caridad, we have opportunities of studying Murillo at his best. The Museum also contains pictures by other Spanish artists, and a fine collection of fragments from the Roman city of Itálica.

The *Casa de Pilatos* (Pilate's House) is a beautiful building which combines in a peculiarly delightful way Moorish, Gothic, and Renaissance styles of architecture. The house was begun early in the sixteenth century at

SEVILLE
PILATE'S HOUSE

the instigation of Don Pedro Enríquez de Ribera, and is supposed to be an imitation of Pilate's house at Jerusalem. Don Pedro's son, the Marqués de Tarifa, who made a trip to the Holy Land, continued the building, and the *Casa* was finally finished towards the end of the century.

For us the beauty of the *patio*, with its fountain and its marble columns and pavement, was enhanced by the quantities of bougainvillæa, which was hanging down like a purple curtain over one wall. From this lovely Moorish courtyard with its delicate arcading we passed on to the chapel which opens off one side ; in it there is a marble column, a copy of the one at Rome, the traditional pillar at which the Saviour was scourged. A magnificent staircase leads to the upper floor ; its walls are covered with beautiful tiles (*azulejos*), which are of the loveliest colours. From the wide balcony we looked down on the *patio* below. Not very much of Pilate's House is shown to the traveller, but enough to make one feel the beauty of it and the unusual yet successful combination of styles. It has been and still is a treasure-house of works of art ; it has remained in one family ever since the first, and successive owners have enriched it and added to its fine collection. Not only that, but its owners made it a meeting-place for distinguished people, of whom Cervantes is said to have been one. In this way, perhaps, the house may be said to typify Seville in miniature, in that it has been the home of illustrious people since its foundation, and in that it shows a harmonious mingling of styles, of East and West, of new and old.

Itálica

In Southern Spain the most beautiful part of the day is the late afternoon. This is fortunate for the Northerner who finds himself in Andalusia in the month of May, for

the heat between one and three makes sightseeing for him an impossibility then. On the last day of our visit to Seville, therefore, we indulged in the inevitable after-lunch siesta, lulled to sleep, as usual, by the plash of the fountain in the *patio*, upon which our bedroom looked. By the time we had finished our rest and had had an early cup of tea it was four o'clock, and our cabman was waiting for us in the street below. The small one-horse carriages of Seville are admirably suited for two passengers, and are extremely comfortable. The hood was drawn over to protect us from the glare of the sun, but in no way interfered with the view. We had an excellent horse—very different from the sorry nags one sees so often in Italy—an intelligent and good-natured driver, and everything promised well for our afternoon excursion to Itálica.

We drove over the bridge which spans the Guadalquivir—a wide, yellow, sluggish-looking river—and turned to the right, through the semi-gypsy suburb of Triana. Here native pottery is made, as it has been made for hundreds of years. The traditional designs used for decoration consist of quaint animal and bird forms, said to be derived from Persian or Egyptian sources.

After about an hour's drive we reached Itálica, where we left our carriage, and proceeded to explore the ruins of the famous Amphitheatre, which is all that is left of the ancient Roman city of Itálica, founded about the year 200 B.C. If for nothing else, the city is worthy of note in that it was the birthplace of three great Roman Emperors—Trajan, Hadrian, and Theodosius. It is interesting to recall that Theodosius was the father of that fascinating personage, Galla Placidia, "twice an Empress and twice a slave", whose beautiful tomb at Ravenna is known to some travellers in Italy.

As we wandered among the ruins, beneath a blazing sun, we marvelled how Hadrian could ever have become inured

to the rigours of the climate in Northern England, child as he was of this sunny land, with its palm-trees and semi-tropical heat. It is, perhaps, not surprising to read that "Hadrian could not remain long enough in Britain to see the completion of his Wall"!

Excavations are still being carried on at Itálica, and a group of workmen was busily engaged in clearing away masses of débris. One of these, who was evidently in charge, came forward to act as our guide. He was a quaint figure in his workman's garb, crowned by an immensely tall black hat, which quite overshadowed his brown, leathery, dried-up, and wrinkled face. (Is it because the women of Spain wear no hats that the menfolk have such large and conspicuous ones?) Our cicerone gave us what information he could about the ruins. He took us to the dark cells where the lions used to be kept; explained that the huge, deep pit in the centre of the arena was flooded at times when aquatic games were preferred to gladiatorial combats; and showed us the narrow channel by which the water was run off when the entertainment was over.

It was with difficulty that we persuaded him to stand beneath Trajan's arch while we photographed it, but he was too picturesque a figure to be omitted. Finally, he agreed to being "snapped" if we would first accept a nosegay of the wild flowers which were growing in the crevices of the crumbling stones. Thus we have a memento of our guide, with his broad hat and broad smile. The flowers quickly drooped and withered in the hot sun, and had to be thrown away, but are also preserved in the picture.

Regretfully we returned to the waiting carriage, stopping for a moment on the way to take a snapshot of the bust of Hadrian, which stands on a pedestal just outside the entrance to the ruins. His nose, alas! is sadly broken;

but we see him, a stately Roman Emperor still, presiding over his birthplace, but with his face turned northwards towards the great Wall, so far away.

The drive homewards, towards six or seven o'clock, was beautiful beyond words. One can hardly speak of the cool of the evening in Andalusia, but, at any rate, the rays of the sun were no longer so fierce, and one could enjoy the heat without being oppressed by it. We passed innumerable mules and donkeys, long lines of them, quite a procession sometimes, all laden with burdens of various kinds; often the panniers were bulged out with earthenware water-pots of all sizes and shapes, or perhaps it was a gleaming load of oranges or lemons. The animals were led by peasants of the Southern type, with their leathery faces and the soft black hats with which we became so familiar.

As we neared Seville the evening light was at its best. The air seemed absolutely pure and transparent, the sky was a pale blue-green; the city, seen on the opposite side of the Guadalquivir, was bathed in a golden light, and the Giralda, that exquisite Moorish tower, standing out clear-cut against the evening sky, took on a rich mellow tone which made it the crowning point of glory in all that beauty. The sun was beginning to set; a few pale stars came out and twinkled feebly. Never had we seen Seville, the Queen of the South, looking more lovely.

CHAPTER VI

GRANADA—THE ALHAMBRA

AFTER a ten or eleven hours' railway journey in a crowded train which crawled along at a snail's pace, a train with no restaurant-car attached—after such a journey when excessive heat and fatigue in like proportion are the order of the day, what hotel would not seem a paradise ? A long drive up a steep hill in the inky darkness, a sensation that we were going through miles of forest land, a sudden halt beneath a lighted lamp and a landlord stepping out of the hotel doorway to greet us ; a winding staircase, a long corridor, then a door flung open at the end, and

> Come, sleep, O sleep, the certain knot of peace,
> The baiting-place of wit, the balm of woe,
> The poor man's wealth, the prisoner's release,
> Th' indifferent judge between the high and low.

Presently a timid knock at the bedroom door, " Are the ladies not coming down to dinner ? " The waiter seemed quite distressed to think that we would not dine, but, filled with a desire for the " chief nourisher in life's feast ", we had no wish for any other refreshment. Utterly worn-out, all we were longing for was sleep, and as we dozed off we decided that, having duly arrived at this delightful outpost of Granada, with its elms and its nightingales, not even the tombs of the Most Glorious Catholic Kings of

Spain could tempt us away from its peace and quiet. Therefore this chapter must start with a confession, and one of such a nature that it will probably alienate all right-minded readers and travellers. "What!" exclaimed an astonished friend, after we had arrived home, "you stayed at Granada, and you never visited the tombs of Ferdinand and Isabella!" No, we did not, tombs and cathedral remain as unknown to us as if we had never crossed the Pyrenees, and all we saw of the actual town itself was a brief survey as we were being driven to the station. This is a sad confession to make, but we found so much to admire and appreciate near at hand that we consoled ourselves by saying that the cathedral could wait till another time. The truth is that our sojourn in Seville, that fascinating but fatiguing city, had tired us out, and all we were longing for at Granada was a period of idleness, of sauntering about, of dreaming and *flânerie*. A sudden distaste for hard facts, or, indeed, information of any kind, seized us, and our only desire was that the beauties of a "stately pleasure dome", or the charm of a lovely landscape, should gradually soak in and be absorbed. In indolent mood, which never left us during our visit, we were content to spend day after day, either at the Alhambra, or at the Generalife, or in taking delightful strolls near at hand, where we sought ever fresh viewpoints from which to admire the glorious panorama of the Sierra Nevada.

Is it fanciful to suggest that we came under the subtle influence of the East, and were so permeated by it that we had no wish except to be under its magic; no wish except to spend long, lazy hours drinking in the loveliness of an Arabian palace, or feasting our eyes on the grandeur of an Alpine, snow-capped range? Was this the spell of the East, or was it merely physical fatigue due to too much railway travelling?

GRANADA

THE ALHAMBRA—A FOUNTAIN

This chapter, then, will contain no careful description of the buildings of the Alhambra, no list of important historical facts, no architectural details, no account of the rise or fall of the Palace of the Moorish Kings; all these things may be found in the many learned books which have been published throughout the years on Granada and its Alhambra.

> So twice five miles of fertile ground
> With walls and towers were girdled round:
> And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills
> Where blossom'd many an incense-bearing tree;
> And here were forests ancient as the hills,
> Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

The Alhambra hill is not quite twice five miles in extent, however, although we were surprised to find that the various buildings covered so large an area. On the other hand, the actual Palace of the Moorish Kings was considerably smaller than we expected. This was our favourite resting-place, and claimed more of our attention than the rest of the innumerable walls and towers. The first morning, having passed the huge, staring Palace of Charles V and the vast company of guides who lie in wait for the unwary—who, it may be said, never tormented us again after having once been given a firm refusal—having passed these two trials, we entered the Palace of the Kings and found refuge in the Court of the Myrtles. In this lovely *patio* we sat, beneath the shelter of the *galeria*, gazing at the clear, green water in the marble tank, watching the goldfish skim about in pursuit of tiny offerings, and listening to the cry of the swallows as they flew about overhead. The stillness was only broken by the faint sound of the birds or the "plop" of a goldfish as it rose to the surface. From time to time a few stray travellers, guide-book in hand, appeared in one of the doorways,

sauntered slowly round the fishpond, and were lost to sight in one of the *salas* beyond. In the pool the reflections of myrtle hedge and slender marble columns were broken by the diverging lines caused by the ripples from the movements of the goldfish. Overhead the sky was azure-blue, and the sun burned like a furnace.

When we tired of inactivity we found beautiful rooms and *patios* to wander in, opening off on three sides of the court. The magnificent Hall of the Ambassadors is entered from beneath the Tower of Comares. It is a square chamber, very lofty, with immensely thick walls, three of which are pierced with lovely window alcoves; glorious views are obtained from these alcoves—each of which is a little room in itself—and it is difficult to say whether there is more beauty without or within.

From here one can wander through to the *Sala de las dos Hermanas*, so called because of two large slabs of marble on the floor, identical in size and colouring. This is a smaller room, and was one of the private apartments of the Moorish King. Looking up to the honeycombed roof, one sees a latticed balcony; this was a sanctum for the ladies of the harem, where, themselves unseen, they could look down on the pageant in the *Sala* below. A sunk fountain is in the centre of the room, and a narrow channel in the floor carries the water down to the Court of the Lions, which is at a slightly lower level. Between the *Sala* and the *patio* outside one passes through a tiny entrance chamber, on each side of which is a niche containing a sunk basin for water. The feature of all Moorish palaces and gardens is the presence of fountains and channels of running water. Desert-dwellers as the Arabs were, when they settled in Spain they brought their craving for ever-present water with them; more than that, they brought their genius for combining its beauty with its utility.

The ideal time for seeing the Alhambra must surely be on January 2nd, the anniversary of the Fall of the Moors, when every fountain is sparkling and dancing in the winter sunshine, and when every channel of water is full to overflowing, as it was in the days of the Moorish Kings. Now, alas! every spring is dry, every fountain silent, and everywhere the marble runnels seem to open parched and gaping lips, as though craving for some Eastern hand to quench their aching thirst. Water formed an essential part of the Moorish religion, and the existence of charming little sunk basins in alcoves denotes that washing of hands before and after every meal which was a necessary religious rite.

The Court of the Lions (*Patio de los Leones*) must be a wonderful sight when the fountain in the centre is playing and tiny rivulets are racing in all directions. This beautiful *patio*, with its group of quaint stiff lions and its lovely arcade of slender marble columns, is one of the most attractive parts of the Alhambra. It is not really a large court, although it frequently appears so in photographs—in fact none of the buildings of the Moorish Palace are on a very extensive scale. One can enter the *Patio de los Leones* either from the Court of the Myrtles, through a delightful portico, or pavilion, which rests on a forest of marble columns, and which projects into the courtyard, or else through the Room of the Two Sisters. Exactly opposite this *sala* is the Hall of the Abencerrages, where a terrible massacre took place in days gone by.

Leaving this part of the palace, we sought the lovely *Sala del Baño*. These fascinating chambers, the Bath-room and the Rest-room, are the quintessence of beauty and luxury. It must be remembered that they are only small, and one must not think in terms of huge Roman baths where numbers of citizens could bathe at once. These are dainty little apartments, glowing with colour

from the glazed tiles of which the walls are composed. Here Royalty laved itself in perfumed water and then reposed its limbs on divans in cunning alcoves. The *Sala del Reposo* has a fountain in the centre, and a musicians' gallery, where sweet music was played to soothe the senses of a tired monarch as he lay at rest after the fatigue of his ablutions.

Returning to the upper part of the palace we wandered along the gallery which leads to the Queen's Dressing Room (*El Tocador de la Reina*). Magnificent views are seen from this projecting tower of the Alhambra. Sheer down below twists the Darro, crossed by one or two quaint bridges, and beyond it we see the tumbledown houses of this part of Granada. If we lift our eyes unto the hills we look straight towards the Albaicin. This barren, cactus-clad hill is the home of the *gitanos*. In the chalk innumerable cave-dwellings are visible even from this distance, and steep, narrow tracks, hidden here and there by masses of prickly-pear, can be seen leading up to these primitive abodes. We never felt any great wish to see George Borrow's friends at close quarters. In the security of one's own home we may read about their qualities at leisure, but for our part we were content to leave them as interesting characters in a book, and the little we did see of gypsy girls (gaudily dressed and flaunting in manner) inspired us with no wish to gain a fuller knowledge.

The glorious views which one enjoys from the various buildings of the Alhambra are no small part of its charm. The hill itself occupies a prominent position, situated as it is high above Granada, and between it and the Sierra Nevada. One can take one's choice of panorama ; there lies the town, straggling out to meet the great wide expanse of *vega*, that richly cultivated plain which is watered by the mingled rivers of the Darro and the Xenil. There are the splendid snow-capped mountains, breathing their cool

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THE ALHAMBRA—ENTRANCE TO MOSQUE

refreshing airs on the sun-baked landscape. The Generalife stands on the hill which we see to the east. Beyond it is the knoll called The Seat of the Moor (*La Silla del Moro*), to which we climbed one late afternoon when the fierce heat had abated.

The best view of all is that obtained from the Keep, or *Torre de la Vela*, a strongly constructed building at the west end of the Alhambra hill. We went to the top of this tower one morning and saw the spot on the roof where the Christian standard was first raised after the Conquest. Great were the rejoicings in the land on January 2, 1492, when the Cross at last triumphed over the Crescent. On the roof hangs a great bell, and this is rung on January 2nd to celebrate the victory. It is also rung at intervals during the twenty-four hours throughout the year to regulate the opening of the irrigation channels in the *Vega* far below.

At the foot of this tower is a narrow terrace overlooking a steep hill-side; this is sometimes called The Hanging Garden, a name which suggests the beauties of Babylon. The strip of ground is well planted with flowers and shrubs, and, as there are seats beneath the shade of the pergolas to tempt the loiterer, he who enters this small paradise will be in no great hurry to leave it. At the far end of the terrace is the well, at the other end is the door by which we entered. On the north side a high red wall shuts off the outer wall, a wall clothed with roses, plumbago, and other flowering creepers. Opposite this is a low, flat-topped wall, on which we lean and peer down at the view below. We see the great, wide plain, with the river winding through it and the distant mountains; to the south rises up the barrier wall of the Sierra Nevada.

One can wander for days in the Alhambra and yet not exhaust all its treasures. There are charming gardens to linger in with fishponds, fountains and orange-trees, and

many towers to visit in the strong surrounding walls. There is a lovely little mosque (*Mezquita*) in the Alta Alhambra, a tiny place, but very delightful; it was in complete darkness when we entered, but the caretaker who unlocked the door threw open a shutter and the sunlight streamed in. Through the window we looked across to the Generalife, which stands high up on a hill separated from the Alhambra by a deep ravine. In the *Mezquita* is a small tiled niche, entered through a beautiful horse-shoe arch; in this sacred recess the Koran used to be kept.

When the hour drew on towards one o'clock, and it was time to return to the hotel, the thought of crossing in the blazing sun the huge, open space by Charles V's Palace was no pleasant one. We would pause for a moment before facing the ordeal, then plunge into the fiery furnace, safely reach the other side, pass through the Gate of Justice, and so into the delicious shade of the avenue of elms. Here there was always the sound of hidden brooks, and the thick branches of the trees made a perfect awning from the rays of the noonday sun.

The Generalife, also, is approached by an avenue of trees, sombre cypresses this time, and a rippling stream of water at each side of the road keeps the air cool and fresh. This little summer palace, on its hill above the ravine, where it catches the refreshing breath of the Sierra Nevada, looks down on the great Alhambra opposite, with its red towers and buildings, a city in itself, enclosed by massive battlements. The one or two rooms of the Generalife are quickly seen, and contain nothing of special interest; it is the garden which attracts.

> I have a garden of my own,
> But so with roses overgrown,
> And lilies, that you would it guess
> To be a little wilderness.

The entrance garden, or court, has a wide channel of water running down the centre. On either side are lovely flower-beds, filled with double pink deutzias, roses, and vallotas. From each side of the rivulet jets of water spring up, scattering their life-giving spray on the vegetation all around and falling in a gentle shower on the central stream. It is difficult to imagine anything more lovely than these living springs of water set amongst the masses of flowers and foliage. A faint fragrance from the myrtle-hedges and from a few orange-trees scents the summer air. As we leave this pleasance we enter another; here are ornamental ponds, and venerable cypresses near their edge give an air of solemnity to the small enclosure.

As we sauntered along by the fishponds we found an enticing stairway paved with Moorish tiles; it led us up the terraced hill-side till we reached the *Mirador*, or tower. This is a small building from whose windows there are most beautiful views. Walking along the level ground on which the *Mirador* is built, we came to another staircase; this led down to the cypress garden below. This stairway fascinated us by the streams of water of which the "banisters" were composed. Instead of a hand-rail at each side there was a half-open stone channel, down which rushed a torrent of water. At the foot of the flight of steps these rivulets disappeared into a round open basin, a newel post, and were lost to view. We could hear the gurgling of water as it hastened to join some hidden stream below.

The Generalife gardens are only on a miniature scale, and yet they are planned in such a way that one has a sense of space and infinite variety. The presence of running water in this burning heat is in itself a satisfaction, and added to this there are lovely flowers and shrubs, all filling the air with their fragrance.

So much for the beauties of the Generalife and the

Alhambra. What of the human side, the tragedies, the serpent in the Eden? Was strife quite unknown amongst the happy ladies of the harem? Was there not a day when a prince had to be let down from an upper window to the ravine below, as his life was in danger from his mother's jealous rival? Is it not said that under that ancient cypress near the fishpond, Zoraya, the "Morning Star", the Sultan's wedded wife, met her Abencerrage lover?

> I guess 't was frightful there to see
> A lady so richly clad as she—
> Beautiful exceedingly!

Vengeance came in due course, and the Hall of the Abencerrages saw the treacherous massacre of some thirty-three members of this noble family. Then came the last tragedy of all, when Boabdil, *El Rey Chico*, having dethroned his father and become king in his stead, had himself to fly before the triumphant entry of Ferdinand and Isabella. The unfortunate king, realizing in a flash all the beauty and power which the victorious Christians had wrested from him, took one last look at the Alhambra, covered his face with his hands, and burst into tears. His stern mother, unmoved by their defeat, and feeling, perhaps, that her son had never been so "little" as in that moment, scourged him with bitter words. "You do well to weep like a woman for what you could not defend as a man!"

There are beautiful walks to be had within a short distance of the Washington Irving Hotel. The main road leads up to the Campo Santo, and at this point another road takes off to the right and goes up a gentle slope. From the top of this rise there are truly wonderful views of the Sierra Nevada and the landscape at its feet. One of the charms of Granada is the mingling of sub-tropical vegetation with ice-bound, snow-capped peaks. The huge agaves with their great pendant flowers (like nothing so

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THE GENERALIFE — A GARDEN

much as the insulators on telegraph-poles), the olive-groves, the hedges of prickly-pear—all these are seen against an Alpine background, are silhouetted against a snow-white mountain-range. Towards evening a delicious coolness comes from the hills, and the scorching heat of noonday is forgotten and forgiven. At Granada we are more than 2,000 feet above sea level, and the air is always fresh, though the sun may be pitiless during the midday hours.

We had interesting walks, too, over the hills above the Generalife ; tracks lead up from the left near the Campo Santo and branch in many directions. One evening we met Sancho Panza himself riding down the path on his mule ; he gave us a wide smile, his leathery face seeming to split in two for the purpose, and passed the time of day as he jogged along.

We saw Moorish reservoirs, conduits and remains of various kinds, and were duly impressed, but when a gypsy child suddenly appeared from nowhere—the cave dwelling evidently being hidden behind a hillock—our interest in the Arab system of irrigation completely lapsed, and, thinking discretion the better part of valour, we turned our steps in the opposite direction with as much speed as dignity would allow.

The evenings were inexpressibly lovely, and we used to watch the shadows lengthening under the olive-trees till the last sunset flush had died down on the snow-capped peaks and all was cold and grey ; then " at one stride came the dark ", and we returned to our hotel with all possible speed.

Alas, for poor Boabdil ! No wonder he wept at having to turn his back on all this beauty. Well might Charles V say as he gazed out of the windows of the Alhambra : " *Desgraciado de el que tal perdió* ! " (" Unhappy he who lost all this ").

CHAPTER VII

GERONA

GERONA! Our first experience of a typically Spanish inn! We are happy in having none but the pleasantest recollections of both town and *fonda*. Gerona is only one and a half hours' distance by rail from the frontier station of Port Bou, but we had travelled from Avignon, and had risen betimes, as our train left that town at an early hour. It was 5.30 p.m. when we reached our destination, and we were feeling a little apprehensive as to what our unknown quarters would have in store for us. (We had purposely decided on the simpler of the two hotels which the little town possesses, as we were determined to see something *typico*.) Never had there been less occasion for taking thought! A comfortable bedroom awaited us, with two alcoves, or *alcobas* as they are called; that is to say, off the bedroom proper opened, Spanish fashion, two tiny rooms side by side, each with its own bed. There were no doors to the alcoves, but the entrance to each was screened by looped-back curtains. Each small room had its own electric light independent of its neighbour. The furnishings, of course, were of the simplest description and the facilities for washing somewhat inadequate for the needs of two dusty travellers; but at any rate everything was clean and well kept. So far so good; but as the evening wore on and our hunger increased we speculated as to what the cook would have in store for us. In due time an excellent

six-course dinner was served, consisting of soup, cauliflower, fish, two meat courses, then "a basket of summer fruit", sweet biscuits, and, lastly, the burnt almonds of which Théophile Gautier speaks in his entertaining book, *Voyage en Espagne*. Wine was included, and, as the pension terms were extremely modest, we felt we had made a wise choice when we decided to patronize this hotel. Our joy was complete when during the night we were waked up by *el sereno*. *Las tres* (three o'clock) the musical voice sounded faintly in the distance; then we heard sandalled feet hurrying up the street. *Las tres*, loud this time, and just beneath our window. The voice grew fainter and fainter till we could only hear the notes of music at the end of each phrase. A long interval, then *Las cuatro*. Alas! by five or six o'clock we had fallen into so deep a sleep that even our enthusiasm for things *typico* could not keep us awake.

The other sound characteristic of Gerona is much less romantic. It is the terrific croaking of the frogs in the river-bed. In the evening the noise is deafening; at first we were puzzled by it and thought it was dogs barking. We soon discovered, however, that the orchestra was of a more persistent nature than even a chorus of curs.

Next morning coffee was served to us in the little garden belonging to our hotel. (We had it at the unusually early hour—for Spain—of eight o'clock. We had had dinner the previous evening at eight o'clock—an unheard-of hour as one travels farther south, where 8.30 or later is the regulation time for dining.) The garden had a pretty fountain at one end where goldfish disported themselves, and a deep well, the inside of which was fringed with maidenhair fern.

As we laboriously sipped our coffee from a basin with the aid of a teaspoon, Madame came up and began to chat.

She deplored the lack of flowers in her garden, but upon our protesting that, at any rate, she grew lovely roses and carnations, she immediately presented each of us with a charming nosegay. We soon heard that she and *señor el propietario* were the proud parents of nine *chicos*, three daughters and six sons. "Yes, all good Spanish wives have many sons, so different from the women of France" (this with a note of disdain in her voice).

With a slight stretch of the imagination Gerona might be called the Spanish Durham; the stream winds round the town rather after the manner of the Wear, and the magnificent cathedral stands high up above the river and occupies a prominent place in the picture, much in the same way as does our splendid Norman building.

There are several bridges over the river, and from them good views are obtained of the quaint old houses, which appear to be toppling over the water, supporting themselves, as it were, on wooden balconies which seem to serve as crutches in their old age.

There is much of interest to see in Gerona, and we regretted that we had not arranged to stay several days instead of only two nights and a day. First of all must be mentioned the beautiful Romanesque cathedral. It is larger than York Cathedral and its severe simplicity and grand proportions are very impressive. The building has no aisles, and the huge span of the stone vaulting of the nave is a remarkable achievement. In addition to the cathedral there are two small churches, which are extremely interesting. These are the tiny tenth-century Romanesque *San Pedro de los Galligans* (St. Peter of the Cock-Crow) and *San Feliú* (St. Felix). All three buildings are near together, though the cathedral occupies the highest ground.

In the morning we found service going on both in the cathedral and in *San Feliú*, while the nave of *San Pedro*

was locked. Later in the day, however, we were more fortunate. Madame had introduced her three pretty daughters to us and kindly offered us the company of her youngest for the afternoon. In that way, she said, we would not miss any of the sights, as perhaps we might otherwise do. For our part we were only too pleased to have a sweet young Spanish girl as our guide.

We found even the space of a long afternoon and evening all too short to enjoy the treasures of the cathedral, two churches, and the interesting museum which is attached to San Pedro. The beautiful cloisters of this little church are filled with fragments of sculpture of all kinds. The bulk of the carvings, including many Roman tombs, have been brought from Ampurias, the site of a Roman town not far distant from Gerona. The cloisters themselves are a joy with their slender columns and quaint carved capitals.

In a room upstairs is housed an excellent collection of Phœnician, Greek, and Roman treasures, as well as more modern exhibits. Amongst many things that might be mentioned are skulls of prehistoric man found near Gerona, and some lovely pieces of Greek sculpture, a marble foot, a hand, and other delightful fragments. Perhaps the most interesting exhibits are the Phœnician glass vases ; these are of an exquisite green iridescent colour, and, though in most cases not much more than the tops remain, enough is left to give one a good idea of the beauty of this early glass. These Phœnician remains have been found near Gerona.

San Pedro has a richly carved west portal consisting of interlacing work, rosettes and a hand with two fingers held down.

Near by is another little Romanesque church, San Nicholas, but it is now used as a saw-mill. The " beautiful truncated spire " of San Feliú has been the joy of travellers

from the time of Augustus Hare (*Wanderings in Spain*, 1873) onwards.

The cathedral, as has been said, is remarkable for the single span of its aisle-less nave. "The clear width of the nave, unsupported by piers, is 73 feet, and its height is admirably proportioned to these enormous dimensions. It is probably the widest Gothic vault in Christendom" (Richard Ford, in *Murray's Guide*, 1889). The vista down the nave is, of course, blocked by the *coro*, an unfortunate feature of Spanish churches. The cathedral was founded by Charlemagne in 786; it was pulled down later and rebuilt in 1016. The *retablo* (altar-screen) is of great size. It is of wood covered with silver and in places set with stones and lovely little panels of enamel. It is surmounted by three huge crosses. The date of this work of art is 1320–48. The episcopal throne is hewn from a solid block of marble. "There's a useful chair to carry about with you!" was the joking comment of the priest who was showing us round. The cloisters are very beautiful and the capitals of the columns are rich in quaint carving.

We spent a delightful time in exploring all the treasures in the Sacristy and the *Sala Capitular*; the sacristan and the priest were both most kind in showing us everything of interest and were full of merry talk. They regretted very much that we could not return the next day in order to see a famous thirteenth-century Bible with a memorandum written in it by Charles V. This is only shown on certain days of the week, and as we were leaving by an early train next morning a return visit was impossible. There were other objects of art of all kinds to be seen, however—notably some wonderful *custodias*, silver-gilt, and set with enamels and precious stones. There is also a remarkable piece of embroidery representing the Creation, said to be of the tenth or eleventh century. The sacristan accom-

panied us up the belfry, and explained the various points of interest in the marvellous view which was spread before us. The sun was beginning to sink, and everything stood out clear cut and well defined. To the north we could see the line of the Pyrenees with snow-capped Canigou. When we had descended to the narrow gallery which leads, high up, round the nave, the great building seemed, in the gloom, to be vaster and more majestic than we had yet seen it.

Our youthful Spanish guide took us back to the hotel by a lovely walk outside the old walls of the city. There was a superb sunset, and the whole sky seemed filled with a golden light. Wild flowers were growing everywhere, and the young girl pulled great armfuls of them, which on our return to the hotel she arranged in a most artistic manner. When we arrived home we found Madame and her other daughters waiting for us in eager anticipation of all our news. Conversation flowed freely and it was agreed on all sides that Gerona " had much merit ", and that the cathedral was justly famous and well worthy of a visit from strangers coming from distant lands.

CHAPTER VIII

VALENCIA—A "FIESTA"—THE WATER TRIBUNAL

"STREW on her roses, roses!" We were in Valencia, the city of flowers. It was the second week in May and the *fiesta* of the Virgin of the Foundlings was at its height. Outside the Church of *Nuestra Señora de los Desamparados* huge awnings were spread to protect the masses of flowers from the heat. The church looks on the *Plaza de la Constitución*—a small square with a park planted with palm-trees and having a fountain in the centre. Not an inch of soil was visible; the little park was entirely filled with pots of flowers, and was a packed mass of blooms. The awnings were spread right over the tops of the palm-trees and reached across to the church opposite —to protect the canvas representation of the Virgin which hung in between the two doorways of the building. As we stood gazing up at the picture made of flowers—for such it was—an upper window opened, and from a basket a woman flung down handful after handful of delicate rose-petals; they fluttered down in a golden shower, falling around the Virgin like a cloud. The picture was made of everlasting flowers fastened on a large piece of canvas; the Virgin was in the centre, with a crown placed above her and on each side was a saint. Beneath was a delightful decorative pattern consisting of stags in the act of running and of birds pecking at bunches of grapes.

The whole design was possibly a copy of some old picture, and the drawing and colouring were well carried out.

We stood patiently in the queue of people who were waiting to enter the church. When we finally stood within we were dumbfounded with the vision of flowers which we saw before us; the small building was literally stacked with roses, red, yellow, and white. There were huge wheels of flowers, wreaths of carnations, showers of arum lilies; the church itself was in darkness except for the blaze of lighted candles near the altar, but the wealth of colour from the mountains of blossoms gave it a brilliance which was positively dazzling. The crowd of worshippers was silent and motionless; most of them were kneeling, all had their eyes fixed on the statue of the Virgin over the altar, while she with the Infant in her arms seemed to be bending down as though to speak to the congregation. The jewels round her neck and in her crown were sparkling and glowing with a thousand lights. The people gazed in rapt adoration, many with their arms outspread—a custom which we afterwards noticed in other Spanish churches, but which we had never before seen in Catholic countries. There was not a sound or movement of any kind, and the sense of stillness was almost overpowering.

A little later we followed a crowd up a flight of steps which led to a chapel behind the altar; from here the back of the Virgin could be seen with her long black hair hanging down. Lighted candles and glowing roses abounded here too, and everyone had to kneel out of respect to *Nuestra Señora de los Desamparados*.

The original statue of the *sagrada ímágen* was carved in 1410, but this is not now exhibited in the church, its place being taken by a modern reproduction. The jewels in the Virgin's crown are said to be worth over £1,000. The

statue is deeply venerated, and the annual *fiesta* in honour of it is one of the principal holidays of Valencia. For nearly a week the festivities continue ; the public parks are lighted up every night with fairy lamps, while from midnight till nearly 2 a.m. cannon boom out at intervals, and there is a brilliant display of fireworks, which light up the sky with falling stars and flying meteors.

Doubtless this all helps to make one realize the gay and pleasure-loving disposition of the Valencians, but, alas ! for the poor weary traveller who night after night is unable to get more than a few hours' sleep ! The noise and dissipation continue till perhaps three o'clock in the morning, then there is a blissful interval of peace. " Oh sleep ! it is a gentle thing, Beloved from pole to pole ! " Unfortunately by 4 a.m. or soon after the endless procession of *tartanas* from the country begins. Surely of all the twenty-four hours of the day there is no better time than five o'clock in the morning for realizing the extent and the richness of the Valencian *huerta* ! Cart after cart laden with fruit and vegetables comes trundling into the town, rattling through the narrow, cobbled streets with jingling of mule-bells and cracking of whips. Truly, as Richard Ford says : " The rich alluvial plains of Valencia know no agricultural repose. . . . The produce is almost incredible." But these indisputable facts bring small consolation during the early hours of the morning.

However, a hotel in a central part of the town has its compensations, as we learnt towards the end of the week. On the Saturday evening there was an interesting procession through the streets, of which we were able to obtain an excellent view from the balcony of our room. Many richly dressed couples passed by on horseback, the man in front, the maid behind him riding pillion ; carts gaily decorated with flowers and branches of trees followed,

VALENCIA

TORRES DE CUARTE

laden with a load of laughing girls who pelted the passers-by with roses; then more horsemen or a crowd of pedestrians carrying gorgeously embroidered banners, more flower-embowered vehicles, and so on till all disappeared through the winding streets and the square in front of our hotel became silent and deserted.

We had timed our visit to Valencia so that we could be present at two different ceremonies which are of weekly occurrence—the one taking place on a Thursday, the other on a Friday. Thursday morning, then, found us outside the cathedral waiting for the ancient *Tribunal de las Aguas* to begin. We had already been up the tower of the *Miguelete* close by, and seen the extensive view of the city and surrounding country which is obtained from the top. In the distance lay the wonderful *huerta*, or garden, of the Valencian plain, irrigated by its eight canals; near at hand was the town itself with its lovely blue-domed buildings; while just above us hung the huge bronze bell named *La Vela*, which is rung at intervals to announce the opening or shutting of the canals. Woe betide the peasant who disregards its warning! Down below, by the "gate" of the cathedral, every Thursday in the blazing sun at noon a court sits in judgment on all delinquents who disobey the stern rules of the irrigation system. The ceremony takes place in the open air just outside *La Puerta de los Apóstoles*; a small round space is railed off from the public and in it are placed for the occasion eight arm-chairs, the presidential one being exactly opposite the entrance.

We were so anxious to be present early in order to get close to the barrier that we over-estimated our powers of endurance, and after standing in the broiling sun for nearly half an hour had to retreat to the coolness of the cathedral and sit there a while to rest. When we went through the Apostle's Gate once more we found the crowd

of spectators had considerably increased, and we could not get near the railing. Everyone was standing waiting for the judges to appear, and people were chatting with their neighbours to pass the time. "You have come over from France to see our Tribunal of the Waters?" a voice close at hand said. "We are not French, we are English," we replied. "English? That's like our Queen," the Spanish lady continued; and then she proceeded to tell us that she also was waiting for the ceremony to begin, but as all the conversations would take place in a Valencian dialect neither she nor we would be able to understand them. As we could not get near enough to the railing to hear, it was not of much consequence what language was used, but we did at least hear a voice call out: "*Se abre el Tribunal.*" At that moment a part of the barrier opened, and eight men entered the circle and took their places in the chairs provided.

The system by which the immense *huerta* of Valencia is watered has been handed down from Moorish times. Of the eight men who appeared seven were judges and the eighth was the president; all were bareheaded, and all except the president wore black smocks. Each man represented one *acequia* (canal), and each chair had the name of its canal painted on it. The judges were all elderly and of the peasant type, with the tanned, wrinkled old faces that Velasquez loved to paint. The president was probably much younger than they; he was clean-shaven—as are nearly all Spaniards—and appeared to be a man of education and intelligence. The various peasants who came to lodge their complaints appeared within the barrier one by one, always bareheaded and always addressing their remarks to the president. He for his part listened quietly, and then, after consulting one or two judges near him, announced his decision to the litigant, who immediately after withdrew without any attempt

at argument. The judge's decision is in all cases absolute, and fines must be paid without any right of appeal.

Though we could not hear anything of what was going on, it was an interesting sight to watch the play of emotion on the faces of those within the circle, and the wonderful movements of the hands by which Spaniards express so much. Equally interesting to us was the crowd of spectators outside; they hailed from both town and country, and all were listening intently to the discussions that were taking place. One old peasant took our fancy very much; he was leaning on a staff with one hand, while with the other he held a bundle over his shoulder; his head was covered, as is usual with Valencian peasants, with a silk handkerchief, one end of which hung down. He wore a black smock, and on his feet were the *alpargatas*, or hempen sandals, which are the invariable form of footgear in this part of Spain. On his queer old face was a look of rapt attention; perhaps he was a relative of one of the litigants and was anxiously waiting to hear the president's decision. His appearance somehow reminded us of old men seen on the stage when *Julius Cæsar* was being enacted. We felt far away from modern times.

This primitive Tribunal of the Waters dates back to the Moorish occupation; it is entirely independent of lawyers and has no written records of any kind. The judges are elected by the peasants of the district. All disputes in connexion with the canals are settled at the Tribunal, which, dating as it does from olden days, must surely form one of the most curious ceremonies in Europe.

The following day we went to the Colegio del Patriarca in the *plaza* of that name; in the Chapel of Corpus Christi attached to the College an interesting religious ceremony takes place every Friday morning. We knew that ladies are not admitted to it unless dressed in black

and wearing the Spanish mantilla ; we had read of women who were forcibly ejected because they tried to enter the church wearing hats. After breakfast, therefore, we rang for our chamber-maid, and explained to her that we were going to the *Miserere*, and that we would like our mantillas arranged for us in correct style. The young girl took much trouble to make us appear Spanish ; with many deft touches she adjusted and readjusted our head-gear, placing a hairpin here and there, and then retiring a few steps backwards with her head on one side to judge of the effect. Meantime an imperious voice along the corridor was calling out impatiently : " *Venga, venga, Maria* ; what are you doing ? " " *Un momento* ; I am coming in a little moment." Shortly afterwards we set out, clothed in black from head to foot, and feeling thoroughly Castilian.

We arrived at the church rather too soon for the ceremony, which did not take place till after ten o'clock, but we sat down on a bench at the back of the building and watched the arrival of the other worshippers. There were no pews, and most of the people entered carrying over their arms camp-stools, which they had hired from an old woman outside. The building was small and very dark, what light there was seeming to come only from the blaze of candles. Opposite the small door by which we had entered there was another similar door, and close to this sat a priest, who scrutinized everyone who passed through. We had seen him looking across at us with an eagle glance ; but presumably our appearance satisfied him, as he did not prevent our entrance. Presently, however, we saw a large, white, pontifical hand held up in protest, and a woman, who was attempting to enter by the opposite door, was stopped dead. The priest rose from his seat and, approaching the woman while she was still on the threshold, expressed strong disapproval of her head-dress. The small

black shawl which she was using as a mantilla was not arranged to his liking, and had to be pulled about and readjusted before permission to enter was given. Meantime we were mentally thanking our little chamber-maid for the time and trouble she had spent over us.

The ceremony of the *Miserere* consists in showing to the congregation in an especially impressive way Ribalta's famous picture of the Crucifixion. Some time before the service began the picture of the Holy Family, which was over the altar, was removed by machinery and black curtains were hung in its place. After a long wait one of the side-doors opened, and some twenty or thirty gorgeously clad priests entered and walked up to the altar in solemn procession. At this point the whole of the congregation had to kneel and to remain kneeling till the service was over. As soon as the chanting began the black curtains above the altar were slowly parted, and the realistic Figure on the Cross was seen in all its intensity.

When the service was over and Ribalta's picture had been once more removed till the following Friday, we followed the crowd of worshippers till we reached a small room at the back of the altar. Here, while everyone knelt, a vast quantity of sacred relics were shown. They were all contained in a large shelved cupboard, and while a priest stood by and pointed with a long stick a little acolyte read from a book in a high-pitched monotonous voice a detailed description of each successive object.

When we were on the point of leaving the church by the door through which we had entered, we saw the priest, who had been all the time stationed at the other door, approaching us. Our hearts sank as we saw him bearing down upon us like a ship in full sail! The image of a large white hand seen silhouetted against the gloom of the church was still fresh in our minds and we wondered which part of our dress gave offence. We were soon to know. Alas, our

sleeves only came down to the elbow! The priest explained to us that in future we must have sleeves which reached to the wrist and which were tight-fitting, elbow sleeves and wide sleeves alike being forbidden. "*Autres pays, autres mœurs!*" Has it not been truly said that morality is only a question of latitude and longitude!

CHAPTER IX

SAGUNTO (MURVIEDRO)

"THE walls don't know how to fall (*no saben caer*)." So the old countrywoman who acted as caretaker told us, as we sat on the steps of the Roman theatre. "They have been there since ancient times, and the centuries have no effect upon them. Even the cannon during the War of Independence could not shatter them; they cannot fall, they are for eternity (*para eternidad*)." The old voice droned on: "Those are letters on the stones, but they don't mean anything to me, as I can't read. The tourists who come, they can read; they bring a book with them and as they mount the ruins they keep reading all the time in their book". We too had our *Baedeker*, but at the moment we were more interested in the picturesque language of the old Spanish lady than in any words on a printed page. "I am fifty and I can't read." Only fifty! Yet, poor woman, she looked infinitely old—as old as the Roman remains whose guardian she was; her face, half in shadow from the old black shawl drawn over her head, was lined and wrinkled with a thousand cares. Her story seemed to be written in the lines of her face as the story of the Romans of old was printed on the inscribed stones at our feet.

We left her resting, and proceeded to scramble up the steps to have a closer view of the ruins. "*Cuidado*,

cuidado, no caigan!" ("Take care, take care; don't fall"), the voice cried after us in notes of warning.

The theatre is built on the slope of a steep hill-side, and the steps of the auditorium are cut out of the natural rock. The outer wall is modern, but the ruined rooms to right and left of the entrance are ancient and are in fairly good condition. There are various Roman stones with inscriptions on them, and some fragments of sculpture, including a fine representation of a bull. The animal is carved out of a single block of red-brown stone, and is a lifelike creature. It is placed under cover in one of the rooms to the left of the entrance.

Wonderful views of the surrounding country are obtained from the steps of the theatre. Immediately beneath us lay the little town of Sagunto, with its whitewashed houses and narrow, cobbled streets; farther away we could trace the huge dry river-bed of the Palancia—for in Spain the last place where one expects to find water is the river, at any rate during the summer months. The plain was rich in orange-groves, acres of them, while beyond the plain rose the mountains.

At last we said good-bye to the old caretaker, the door of the theatre was locked behind us, and, following her directions, we began to climb up the winding road which leads to the famous *castillo*—for the theatre lies outside the castle walls on the landward slope of the hill.

The ancient city of Saguntum, now called Sagunto, but for some time known as Murviedro, was a Greek colony founded by wanderers from the island of Zacynthus. Saguntum is famous for its heroic resistance to Hannibal. The great Carthaginian general determined to capture it for his country, impoverished by the recent loss of Sicily. Livy tells us that it was "by far the most opulent city beyond the Iberus (Ebro). Its inhabitants had risen in a

short time to great wealth, either by their gains from the sea or the land, or by the increase of their numbers, or the integrity of their principles, by which they maintained faith with their allies, even to their own destruction."

Hannibal brought forward his army of a hundred and fifty thousand soldiers, laid bare the surrounding country, and then proceeded to attack the city from three points at once. This was in the year 219 B.C., and for eight long months the siege continued, Carthaginians and Saguntines fighting alike with the utmost ferocity. The latter, hard-pressed, appealed to their ally, Rome, but help never came to them from that quarter. At one time Hannibal, by aid of his battering rams, succeeded in making a breach in the wall; "three successive towers and all the wall between them fell down with an immense crash, and the Carthaginians believed that the town was taken," but they found themselves opposed by so formidable a body of Saguntines that they were obliged, after terrific fighting, to retreat hastily to their own camp.

At length, however, the Saguntines were at the end of their resources. Their supplies of all kinds were rapidly diminishing, the country all around was in the hands of the enemy, and there was now no hope of help from Rome. Finally, Hannibal sent them a message to say he would deprive them of their city, but would spare each man his life, and those of his wife and children, provided that everyone was prepared "to depart from Saguntum, unarmed, each with two garments". For answer the Saguntines lit a huge fire and threw themselves and everything they had of value upon it. When Hannibal entered the city he found it a heap of ruins.

Sagunto has been held successively by Greeks, Carthaginians, Romans, Goths, Moors, and Spaniards. The nations have fought over its ground for more than two

thousand years, and the last struggle took place in 1810, during the War of Independence. Since that date Sagunto has had peace and is besieged only by a small army of travellers, whose *Baedeker* is their only weapon.

Sagunto has been called the key to Valencia, the doorway to that vast plain whose richness provides " wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart ". It is perhaps for this reason that the nations have fought so fiercely to possess it.

Formerly the sea came much nearer to the city, but now it has receded, and is visible only as a blue streak in the distance. The hill slopes sharply down towards the seaward side, and the old walls of the Castle crown its summit. Masses of prickly-pear cling to the steep and stony slopes. The walls are very extensive, and for a considerable distance the top of the hill is girdled with them. One can well believe that the ruins are among the largest of their kind in Spain ; one could wander for long and not exhaust all their treasures. In one place is shown the spot where the Roman temple stood ; not far away a Moorish bath is seen—a long oval structure sunk in the ground. The Castle itself is said to be chiefly Moorish, and the southern boundary wall, with its succession of small towers, leading down from the top of the hill to the village below, is Moorish also. Some square buildings dating from the time of the War of Independence, interfere with the picturesqueness of the ruins, and some of the outer walls also are modern. But, for the interest of its historic associations, for its commanding position, and for the beauty of its surroundings, the Castle of Sagunto must take a high place among the ancient sites of Spain.

The little town of Sagunto—on the landward slope below the Castle and the theatre—has several points of interest. It is said to contain many old Moorish houses,

SAGUNTO

THE CASTILLO

the remains of the Roman bridge over the Palancia are still visible, and there is a Roman doorway in a good state of preservation ; it is several feet below the surface of the present road, as the entire village is some 7 feet higher than it was in ancient times.

The wide river-bed is seen a little below the village. As has been said, the Palancia contains no water during the summer months ; true, there are one or two stagnant puddles in the centre, but flowing stream there is none.

Our friend at the theatre had told us of the scarcity of water and the sufferings it entailed. "What can we do without water and without rain ? Water is the first essential ; we need it for cooking, for drinking, for washing. The plants will not grow for lack of it. Food gets dearer and dearer ; everything, everything, costs so much, even bread and potatoes. The poor here are *very* poor. For the rich it is different—they have their houses, their money, their friends. The poor have nothing but their wrinkles. We shall all die like dogs unless someone will bring us water."

There are two wells, however, in or near the village, and it was a joy to watch the women strolling to and fro with their water-pots. The earthenware jars used are of the most beautiful shape, and the designs obviously date from Greek times. They are long and tapering, with a somewhat narrow base, and a handle projecting on each side at the widest part. The women carry them on their hips ; or rather they support a Greek jar on their hip with one hand, while with the other they carry another similar pot, or else one of the quaint little water vessels which are made at Sagunto. These are of cork, with bands of brass to hold the cork in place, and a brass handle at the top ; the spout has a screw with a chain attached, to prevent any dust getting in. The brass is ornamented with a running

scroll pattern, and the vessel is an excellent piece of workmanship. Some are shaped like small barrels and rest on tiny brass feet; others are of a straight up and down design; both kinds are made in all sizes, big and little.

It was a pretty sight to see the groups of women and young girls at the well; some would be resting their empty jars on the parapet, others would be chatting, while one was plunging her pots down, deep down, to the water far below. Then they would disappear through the narrow dusty streets, balancing their jars on their hips, with one arm projecting like a handle from their bodies.

As we strolled through the village we came upon a quiet road on which a warehouse opened. As we passed the open doorway we caught a glimpse of a charming picture within. The building was in darkness, save at one end, where it seemed to be lit up as it were by a pyramid of oranges; "ten thousand saw I at a glance," piled up heavenwards, a mountain of golden fruit at the foot of which a group of women were bending. The *vega* round Sagunto is a very paradise of fruit; oranges, apricots, and loquats grow everywhere in profusion. The loquat-trees are particularly attractive; first, the long straight stem, then the umbrella-like mass of grey-green foliage, with the lovely dull orange-coloured fruit growing in little clusters.

We wandered back to the village, and entered a handicraft shop where the cork water-vessels are made. The youth who had made the one we decided to buy offered to put our initials on the brass band. As he squatted down on a stool, his sandalled feet crossed and a chisel in his hand, he might have been a Greek craftsman of old, with his hyacinthine locks and his finely cut features. An old woman who was passing looked through the bead curtain and immediately entered into conversation. "That water vessel you have bought, it will long outlive you, it will last for ever, it is for eternity." *Para eternidad!* The

expression seemed to be on the lips of all the Saguntines! Perhaps if the history of one's town goes back to about 300 B.C., it is difficult to think in terms of the flying moment. Be that as it may, our brief visit to Sagunto gave us the impression that we had stepped into ancient times, that we had left the twentieth century and lived for a moment amidst "old, forgotten, far-off things, and battles long ago".

CHAPTER X

DENIA

THE journey from Valencia to Denia is full of interest. The first part of the way lies through rice-fields in which peasants were busily working, despite the fact that it was Sunday. The rice-fields appear as so many chess-boards, the lines of the squares being raised-up mud barriers, just wide enough for a man to walk along. The fields are flooded to a depth of several inches, and the barefoot peasants spend many hours in the stagnant water, stooping over and tending the fresh green blades of rice. One can well believe that fevers are rampant in these parts, which must be a happy breeding-ground for mosquitoes and other noxious insects.

In due course of time we reached the junction station of Carcagente, and here we left the Valencia–Madrid line and changed into the little train which takes to Denia. The whole distance from Valencia to Denia is less than seventy miles, and we lost no undue time at Carcagente, yet it took four hours to cover this short piece of country. However, it gave us ample time for observation, so we have no just cause for complaint.

At Carcagente we leave the fertile *huerta* of Valencia and the scenery becomes wild and mountainous; or rather it is a combination of richly cultivated valleys and rocky picturesque hills—a strange contrast.

The air was heavy with the scent of orange blossom, the

broad valley was planted thickly with orange-trees, carobs, apricots, and mulberries, while rising steeply up from all this vegetation were the splendid mountains with their bold peaks and bare, rocky sides. One inaccessible-looking summit was crowned with three crosses, perhaps the scene of some mountain tragedy far up above the smiling vale.

Now and then one would catch glimpses of side valleys ; or perhaps there would be a view of a dusty plain—a long white ribbon road leading up to a circle of cone-shaped hills at the end. Up this track would thunder a motor diligence, bearing away from the wayside station its freight of laughing, gesticulating, noisy country folk, and scattering clouds of dust in its train.

Mountains and more mountains, blue in the distance, clear-cut against the lovely evening sky ; but the light was fading quickly and by 7.30 it was quite dark. For some time before this, however, we had had our attention to the scenery diverted by events near at hand. The tiny train consisted chiefly of third-class carriages, though there was one coach divided into first- and second-class compartments ; there was not much to choose between these two, except that perhaps the first-class was slightly the cleaner. Outside each coach was a small open-air platform, and one could walk through the whole train by the passage-way down the middle.

Our first trial was the advent of begging gypsy children. We heard the sound of castanets farther up the train, and they gradually came nearer and nearer. Soon an incredibly dirty child of about six years of age, accompanied by an older girl of about fourteen, stood before us in the corridor ; the elder child played the castanets while the younger one danced. There was something singularly repulsive about them both, which was heightened by the fact that we had no means of escape from their attentions.

We learned later that next day their place had been

taken by gypsy boys, the younger of whom first of all danced and then suddenly pulled back his ragged garments and showed all his horrible deformities. This child, we were told, could make as much as £2 a day. The gypsies had made their appearance soon after leaving Carcagente, and after they took their departure we had peace for a brief space. For some distance, however, we had been struck by the number of village people who stood blocking the platforms of every wayside station where we stopped. As the evening advanced the crowds became denser and denser. They were not composed of travellers, of course—only of idlers who had come to see the train and to have a pleasant outing. As it happened, we picked up few passengers en route ; had it been otherwise, how anyone could have forced his way through that surging mass of humanity is a mystery. Even before the train reached the station we could hear the roar of conversation, and by the time we had pulled up the din and hubbub was literally deafening.

At one or two stations the youths and maidens (for they were all young people), not content with pacing the platforms, stormed the train and surged like a flood from end to end—first, second, or third class were all alike to them in their mad excitement, as they shouted remarks to each other from carriage to carriage and rushed along like wild things. Many of them travelled on to the next station, though, needless to say, without tickets. Our hearts misgave us as to how we were to manage at Denia if the same state of affairs prevailed there.

Why had we decided to go to such an out-of-the-way place ? We had no recent information about it, our *Baedeker* was twenty years old, we had never read or heard of anyone who had been there. The guide-book informed us there was one hotel—" clean " was the laconic remark. We had engaged our rooms from Valencia, but

who can say in Spain whether a post card will ever reach its destination or not? The reason of our journey was nothing more nor less than a whimsical desire to see the spot where the oranges grew. In dark December days we had straightened out the pink paper which was wrapped around the fruit and had read the mystic word in gilt letters, DENIA. This conjured up visions of an azure sea, a group of palm-trees, an orange-grove filled with golden fruit.

As the sun sank in the heavens so our spirits slowly sank to zero. Who could have believed that the approach to the golden fruit was guarded by such a hundred-headed monster? Only seventy miles to Denia?—But emotions cannot be measured in terms of mileage. Surely we had covered continents! Where was the "vision splendid" now? The December dream had faded, and our one desire was a comfortable hotel and a good meal. Would Dame Fortune treat us kindly? Yes, one more turn of her wheel and everything was arranged for us as we wished. When we arrived at Denia we found perfect tranquillity reigning there—peace after a great storm. The amiable landlord had sent a *chico* to the station to meet us, and we very soon found ourselves and our luggage installed in comfortable rooms in a delightful little *fonda*.

This was the beginning of several pleasant, peaceful days spent at Denia. True, there was a café opposite, and the conversation roared beneath our windows till far into the night; but this one must expect in Spain, the acknowledged land of eloquence. Presumably Spaniards cease talking when they are asleep, but it is difficult to believe them silent at any other time.

Our hotel looked on the main street—a quiet road with an avenue of magnificent plane-trees, which leads up from the harbour into the small market square. The little town is prettily situated on the shores of the Mediterranean, and

is dominated to the south by the huge mass of the Mongó, a rugged-looking limestone mountain 2,495 feet high, whose sharp headland faces the sea, while the long back slopes landwards.

While the Mongó is a mile or two away, close at hand and rising from the town itself is the rocky hill on which Denia Castle stands. Glorious views of sea and country are obtained from the summit. Just beneath us lay the harbour with its long moles to north and south, leaving only a narrow entrance. Southwards the view is necessarily blocked by the Mongó, but the coast-line can be seen as far as the point on which a whitewashed Moorish tower stands. Northwards many miles of coast-line are visible, with blue hills in the distance coming close to the shore, and far away one long promontory with a cone-shaped mountain which seems to rise straight from the sea. Inland we see the flat plain which leads up to a great circle of hills beyond, while near at hand are whitewashed houses and many palm-trees.

The ruins themselves tell much the same tale that we hear at so many Spanish castles. We read that it was an ancient Iberian town, then the Greeks came, later the Romans (who called it Dianium), then the Goths; the Moors occupied it from 715–1253, and this was its period of greatest prosperity.

The last incidents of all came in 1813, during the War of Independence. We found Roman stones and inscriptions everywhere; we saw Moorish towers with their domes, the remains of a Moorish palace, a small chamber in which a quantity of Moorish money was found, a ruined Gothic church, quaint winding stairways—the records of successive civilizations.

The Castle occupies a splendid position, built as it is on the summit of a rocky height. We were fortunate in seeing it when we did, as subsequent travellers who visit

it will find its picturesqueness defaced by a hideous modern monument, which was in process of construction while we were there.

The hill slopes steeply to the south, and this side has been terraced for the cultivation of vines. Here are grown the *pasas*, or raisins, of Denia. These are not the dessert fruits which are cultivated farther south, but are cooking-raisins, and as such are exported in large quantities to England. We learned from the youth who was acting as our guide something of the process by which they are dried. There is a wide, flat terrace not far from the entrance to the Castle, and this is used as a "drying-ground". At one end is an open-air fireplace, and on this is placed an enormous cauldron, three-quarters full of hot water; into this the grapes are dropped, together with *hierbas de los montes*, and are then boiled. Afterwards they are placed on bamboo matting and spread out to dry in the sun. The drying process takes from three to five days. This is in the month of August; should rain come—a comparatively rare event at Denia—a *vela*, or covering, is spread over the fruit.

Amongst other vegetation on the Castle hill we noticed pomegranates (two kinds, the youth told us, the sweet and the bitter), and figs; prickly-pears, of course, were flourishing in all the uncomfortable places where self-respecting plants refused to live. We saw, also, sweet-scented jasmine, dwarf asphodel, and the graceful cinnamon of Castile, laden with its fragile flowers of a pale mauve colour and its stalwart-looking nuts. These, we were told, are painted and then made into necklaces.

The vegetation in the Denia district is very varied; quite near the coast are many palm-trees and vines, farther inland are miles of olive-groves, more vines, and some orange-groves; wheat also is largely grown. If we keep to the coast, however, and walk in a south-easterly direc-

tion towards Javéa, once we have left the region of houses we find ourselves on the maquis. No tall palms or other trees here—nothing but the dwarf pines, the low-growing palmito, and the characteristic scented flowers and shrubs of the maquis.

This was the most beautiful walk we had at Denia ; we were aiming for the Moorish tower, which occupies a prominent position on a point overlooking the sea. We reached it, and went a little beyond, but time did not permit us to attempt the longer distance to Javéa. When we had left the vineyards and houses we struck a steep zigzag track which led us up to the whitewashed tower itself. The air was filled with the delicious fragrance of lavender, rosemary, and *pistacia lentiscus* (the mastic bush), which the blazing heat of the sun intensified. We made bouquets of pale purple scabious, mauve cistus (rock rose), pink dianthus, and a small yellow snapdragon ; we gathered handfuls of lavender and rosemary, and with the aid of sharp stones dug up the huge bulbs of some kind of lily, the flowers of which were over but whose withered leaves testified to a vigorous growth in early spring.

When we reached the Moorish tower a glorious view rewarded us. Above, the frowning forehead of Mongó scowled down upon us, for we had invaded his territory, and broken the silence and seclusion which are his by reason of his loneliness. Below us was the blue Mediterranean, a rocky shore, a once-used harbour where the sea was a deep blue-green ; as we looked we could trace in the clear transparency of the water the remains of another round tower, in a line with the one near which we stood. Round the northward side of the promontory lay the vineyards and other cultivated squares, looking like so many patchwork quilts laid out to dry.

In the deserted harbour a small boat lay moored, a sailing ship was passing far out to sea—doubtless with

" raisins in the cabin and almonds in the hold ". What a setting for a tale of adventure! Memories of *Treasure Island*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *The Blue Lagoon*, seemed floating in the air; surely some youthful spirits, some budding pirates must at one time have revelled in the isolation of the tower as a dwelling-place! Midnight raids might be made on the vineyards far below, fish can be caught by moonlight—a diet of fruit, fish, wine, and bread—what more could one want in that Southern clime? Safe hiding-places for stolen treasure could be found on Mongó's slopes, and there are other Moorish towers, not far away, where kindred spirits could enjoy security.

During a long drive which we took one day to Javéa, we saw no fewer than nine of these towers on the ridge of a hill; they were placed at regular intervals down the slope and looked in the distance like a row of toppling ninepins.

The joy of driving to Javéa in a *jardinera*—a four-wheeled country vehicle with no springs—can easily be overrated. Certainly the scenery is magnificent and one gets a splendid view of Mongó, as it is necessary to make the complete circuit of his broad back before arriving at Javéa; but it is a fatiguing excursion, and we would have been well advised if we had taken the landlord's advice and hired a motor-car instead. On the homeward journey during the hottest time of the day we felt that the sleeping peasants had chosen the better part. There they lay beneath the olive-trees, with their cloaks thrown over them, profoundly asleep, oblivious to everything, motionless, while the patient mules and donkeys stood by as bodyguard.

CHAPTER XI

ALICANTE—ELCHE

ALICANTE, it must be confessed, is a disappointing place. Even the comforts of an excellent hotel could not wholly reconcile us to it. What did console us was the thought that if we had not gone there we should have missed the magnificent coastal scenery between Denia and it. This piece of railway line has only been constructed some ten years, and as we had seen no mention of it in any guide-book, we were unaware of its existence until we reached Denia. Two trains in the day leave this place for Alicante, the journey occupying about five hours. We had intended taking the late-afternoon train which reaches Alicante after dark, but our landlord, on hearing this, exclaimed, "*Qué lástima*!" ("What a pity"). And when he proceeded to tell us how we would miss all the beauty of the scenery by not travelling in daylight hours, we at once decided to profit by his advice and take the morning train. We found the enthusiastic description by no means exaggerated. In this part of Spain the mountains come right down to the coast, and one has thus the joy of seeing both hills and sea at the same time. At various points the railway line runs close to the coast and the traveller sees lovely pictures of sandy shore, rocky cliffs, and dazzling blue sea. Soon after leaving Denia we had a magnificent view of Mongó, that great bare mountain mass which seems to dominate the landscape. Soon, however, we came within

sight of his rivals, who took up the tale one by one till we reached Alicante. At Benisa the line diverged slightly to avoid a promontory. At the extreme point of this a huge, naked, rocky mountain, rose up sheer from the flat plain at its feet. The morning mists were shrouding the base and the blue sea was all around, so that at first we were convinced it was an island mountain. After a while, however, the mist cleared away, and we saw the rocky pile standing splendidly aloof on a dead flat stretch of land. Surely a twin brother to Gibraltar we thought.

The land between the sea on our left and the hills on our right was richly cultivated all the way to Alicante; there were miles of vineyards and many carob-trees; now and then the train passed over the gorge of a dry river-bed whose slopes were clothed with prickly-pears and aloes. As we neared Alicante the line ran close to the shore, and we had glorious views of sandy coves and rocky headlands. When we reached our destination, we found that the town nestled at the foot of a bare, rocky hill, on the summit of which stood the Castle of Santa Bárbara. Next day we obtained from the Military Governor a permit to look over the ruins of the old part of the castle—the restored portion being used as a barracks. We had as guide a taciturn young soldier, from whom we could obtain no information whatever; he was one of the few silent Spaniards we ever met. We admired the splendid view of sea, harbour, town, and surrounding country, but as regards facts we came away no wiser than when we had entered. When we were leaving our guide presented us with sprays of a flowering bush which we had been admiring, thereby proving that at any rate he bore us no ill will! Numerous well-made paths lead up to the castle; these are cut out of the bare hill-sides and make pleasant walks. We were interested in reading several public notices which were painted on flattened

portions of the rock. These were always to urge passers-by not to destroy, and often took the form of poetry, as for example :—

> Lugar sagrado es un bosque
> Ay de quien no lo repeta !
> Maladita de Dios la mano que
> Tala o que lo incendia.

(A wood is a sacred place. Alas for him who does not respect it! Cursed of God the hand which cuts or which sets fire to it.)

There is a fine public promenade at Alicante which runs along the front for a considerable distance. It has a double row of palm-trees and is well planted with flowers and shrubs. In some of the beds there were masses of great white daturas, whose delicious scent in the evening was almost overpowering. The principal hotels look on to this palm avenue, and the harbour lies just beyond. It was interesting to watch the various vessels in this busy port. An immense trade is done in exporting wine, which is chiefly used for mixing with other wines. There are several large bathing establishments at the northern end of the promenade—Alicante being very popular with the Madrilenos as a sea-bathing resort during the summer months, when the heat of their own city has become almost intolerable. We were told that the season had not yet started, however, and there was certainly a deserted and rather dejected air about the huge half-empty wooden erections. Perhaps the unusually cool weather—for Spain—accounted for this. When we were driving one afternoon to pass the time, our driver complained sadly to us of " the cold ". He called upon us to notice that the horse still required a blanket thrown over it when the carriage was not moving, and this despite the fact that it was now the third week in May. He himself, he informed

us, was still wearing the same clothes he had worn all the winter. For our part we were revelling in the lovely sunshine and clear skies, and congratulating ourselves on the fact that, except for a severe thunderstorm, we had only once seen rain since leaving England. The Spanish " cold " meant warmth to us.

In spite of blue sea and sky and sandy beach, however, Alicante does not contain anything of sufficient interest to attract the traveller for long. It lacks the charm of a small simple place, and yet it has not the advantages of a big city. It falls between the two, and is merely a rather dull commercial town. We were not sorry when, after two nights' stay, we mounted one morning the motor diligence which was to take us to Elche. With our luggage safely secured on the top of the vehicle and ourselves comfortably installed in the two front seats, we set forth on our travels once more, " Glad to have come, not sorry to depart ".

Soon we had left the town and were rattling along on the road to Elche through a flat, sandy piece of land—for the mountains were behind us now. We saw the long white road stretching for miles in front of us ; there was, of course, no fence or hedge on either side—nothing but open country planted thickly with almond-trees, vines, carob-trees, or pomegranates. Now and then we stopped at a homely wayside inn to pick up country passengers, but our unwieldy vehicle soon set off again on its journey over the rough, uneven road, jolting and heaving along, and covering everything with clouds of white, choking dust as it went.

A small placard near the front seats said, " Please do not talk to the driver ", and we rigorously observed this request ; but it takes a good deal to impose absolute silence on a Spaniard, and a few stray remarks were addressed to us by the chauffeur in spite of it.

The short distance of ten miles was quickly covered, and soon scattered clumps of palm-trees announced that we were approaching Elche—"The city of palms".

Elche

"I said, 'I will go up to the palm-tree, I will take hold of the boughs thereof'." But the boughs were much too lofty and majestic for us to reach—apart from the fact that notices were stuck up everywhere, "Please do not touch". Instead, a soft southern wind took "hold of the boughs thereof" and gently rocked them in the azure sky. Later, as we gazed down upon the palm-groves from the roof of the Mirador, we found it difficult to believe that we were in Europe. We were in the centre of an impenetrable forest; acres of palms were around us, whose feathery tops were fanning the sky with a languid, caressing touch. This is the well-known "vista" of the palm-groves from the Villa Carmen, but more wonderful still is the extensive view of the country obtained from the tower of the Church of Santa Maria. A truly Oriental picture awaits anyone who will take the trouble to mount up the 128 feet and step out on the stone roof of the building. As seen from here the palm-trees supply the only vegetation or greenery in what is to all appearances a part of Africa. In the distance we see the naked, rocky mountains, red-brown as if burnt by the fierce rays of the sun; at their feet the sandy plain with its scattered whitewashed houses and clumps of palms; then a dry river-bed, and near at hand the flat-roofed buildings and the narrow streets of Elche. An Eastern scene in four vivid colours blazing beneath a sub-tropical sun, while the air vibrated with the ringing of church bells.

One monster bronze bell hung in the centre of the tower and eight smaller ones swung in the arched openings.

ELCHE

A DATE-GATHERER AT WORK

Three youths in black alpaca smocks were hard at work grappling with the ropes, while above them the bells jigged and danced in a frenzy of joy. The air was alive with the sounds, and speech was impossible. The three young men pulled and tugged till the tower itself seemed tottering with all the noise and vibration. It was a relief to plunge down into the dark, winding staircase and find the comparative silence which the thick walls supplied.

What a contrast there was in the stillness of the palm-groves! Though quite near the town we seemed to be far away from its noises. The grounds which we were visiting are private property, and besides the guide and ourselves there was no one to be seen except the gardener and his wife, who occupied a small house near the entrance. They were going to gather dates, and we went with them to see how it was done. The man had a stout piece of rope with him; this he flung round himself and round the stem, knotted it and then began to walk up the tree trunk, planting his feet firmly in the notches where the old branches had fallen off, and moving the rope higher up each time he took a fresh step. When he reached the point where the bunches of dates were hanging down, the woman below held up a large open basket made of hemp and the fruit was flung down into it with unerring precision. We were invited to help ourselves, which we did with enthusiasm—for these were the first dates fresh from the tree which we had eaten, and we were standing on the only spot in Europe where they are grown for profit. It must be admitted that the Elche dates do not compare favourably with the Algerian, but the beauty and novelty of the surroundings more than compensated for any lack of flavour which a critical palate might observe.

Our guide chatted to us of times and seasons as we threaded our way through the avenues. The flowers are fertilized in the month of May, he told us, and the fruits

begin to ripen in November. Those we had just been eating were too late ripened to have the best flavour. (No matter; "it was a tree good for food, and pleasant to the eyes".)

As we wandered through the grove we noticed some of the young male palms tightly bound up as though in swaddling clothes (reminding one of the bambinos seen in Italian pictures). The tree can only withstand this drastic process of bleaching once in four years, but it is consoling to know that it suffers in a good cause. We knew, without being told, that a noble destiny awaited the tied-up branches. Next Easter, blanched by many months' deprivation of light and sunshine, they would be blessed by the priests and then sold to the faithful as a protection against the dangers of lightning. Often during our first visit to Spain we had been puzzled by seeing these long yellow palms fastened up over innumerable buildings. But surely this is a more romantic way of protecting one's house than attaching a piece of wire to the chimney-pot!

Shafts of sunlight pierced through the trees and threw fan-like shadows on the sandy paths. Everywhere great clumps of scarlet geraniums were blooming. At one point we came upon a strange and lovely thing whose beauty took our breath away—a bush with delicate feathery foliage; the flower was a primrose-yellow, and from its centre a great scarlet pistil shot out like a forked tongue. This was the cassia-tree, the bark of which is aromatic.

There is one mighty monarch of a palm which everyone is called upon to admire. It is called *La Imperial*. It is more than 200 years old, and is so infirm that it has to be propped up with a wooden scaffolding. From the original stem have sprung away seven young trees—*chicos* (little ones) our guide called them, worthy scions of an

ancient house. This is the presiding genius of the grove. Long may it live to reign over this piece of Africa in Europe!

The Lady of Elche

Any account of Elche would be incomplete if mention were not made of the famous stone bust which was dug up near the town in August 1897. This is known as "The Lady of Elche", and represents a woman with a peculiar form of head gear and with large ear-rings. This important work of art was bought by the French as soon as it was discovered and placed in the Louvre. The date of it is said to be about 440 B.C. The bust is life-size, and there is still some trace of the original colour. It is believed to be the work of a native Iberian sculptor who was strongly influenced by Oriental and Greek traditions. Restored to Spain within recent years, it is now housed in the National Museums at Madrid.

CHAPTER XII

MURCIA

THE trains running between Elche and Murcia are somewhat slow and infrequent—though this remark might be applied with equal truth to many Spanish trains—so we decided to hire a private motor-car and cover the 60 kilometres in comfort. We were glad, afterwards, that we had taken this golden opportunity of seeing a part of African Spain. The car proved to be quite luxurious, with ample room for our luggage, and the young boy who acted as chauffeur was an experienced driver. He drove at a great pace—indeed, this seems to be the invariable rule with Spanish motorists, unless it is that any speed seems excessive in comparison with the slow-moving ox-carts which one meets perpetually on the road. The surface of the road was not as bad as might be expected, and we thoroughly enjoyed the long run.

The country through which we passed seemed to us to be thoroughly Oriental. On our left was a wide, flat plain which stretched away to the sea; on our right rose up a chain of absolutely bare, rocky mountains. At first sight these appeared to be utterly devoid of vegetation, but presently one could discern small tufts of scrub which here and there grew in the crevices of the rock. The whole tone of the landscape was a yellow-brown; the soil was sandy and the rocky hills were a reddish-brown, surely colours of the Sahara. There were many palm-trees,

all seeming to enjoy life as though in their natural habitat ; there were also orange-trees—though not so many of these—carobs, olives, and vines. Wheat is largely cultivated in this district and esparto grass grows freely there. Now and then we dashed through a straggling village with its whitewashed houses and blue-domed church ; once we passed rock-dwellings—modern ones be it said, for Spanish gypsies have a genius for making a barren hill-side into a home. We were struck by the picturesque position of the Castle of Monte Agudo, perched aloft on its rocky peak, and would gladly have stopped to visit it ; but time pressed and we were anxious to reach Murcia by lunch-time. This we accomplished, thanks to the speed of our car.

Murcia is a busy, thriving city, situated on the Segura, in whose rocky ravine "living waters flow"—quite an achievement for a Spanish river. The narrow streets are crowded with traffic; but two of the principal ones are reserved for pedestrians only, no vehicles of any kind being allowed. These are the *Calle Platería* and the *Calle Principe Alfonso*, which cross each other at right-angles. With their huge awnings (or *toldos*) stretched across from roof to roof as a means of protection from the sun, these two streets are reminiscent of the well-known *Calle de las Sierpes* at Seville—that foot-passenger's haven of refuge.

In the various principal streets warning notices are stuck up as follows : "Swearing is strictly forbidden", "Blasphemy will be severely punished". One wonders if these ever act as a deterrent to would-be delinquents.

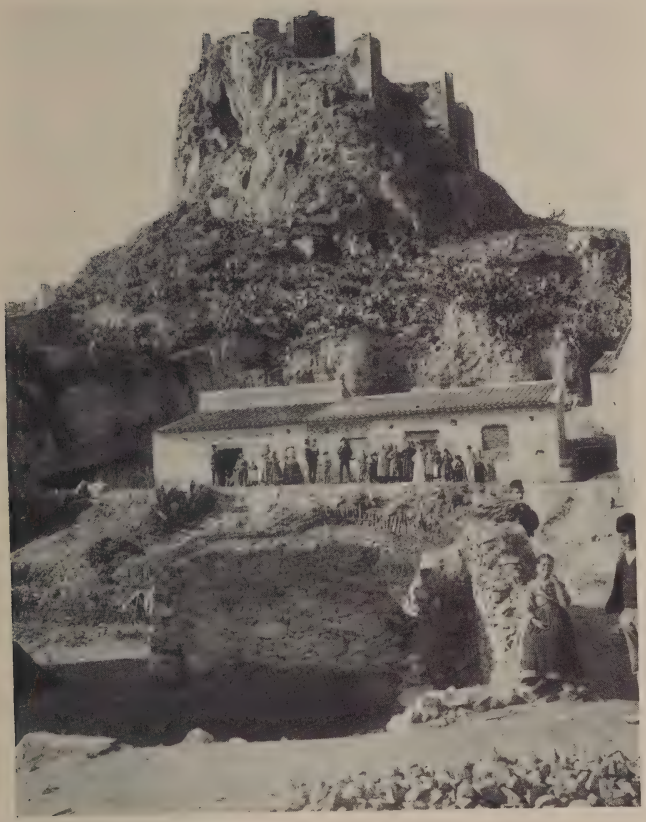
The town is dominated by the huge cathedral ; the building was modernized in the sixteenth century and has a rococo western façade. The exterior contains nothing of interest, but the tower is impressive on account of its height. A magnificent view is obtained from the

top, though the ascent is a somewhat arduous undertaking. As we stood on the little balcony at the summit and looked down at the *plaza* immediately below, with its Noah's Ark trees and its two lines of carriages waiting to be hired, everything seemed to us to be grotesquely small, and we felt as though we were gazing at a child's box of toys.

Meantime the boy who accompanied us was amusing himself by standing on the most exposed portions of the balcony he could find. On our asking if he was not afraid, for answer he laughed and mounted still higher. This time he chose a narrow stone ledge inside the topmost cupola, and as it was open at the sides he explained that he was visible to everyone in the town who cared to look up.

We had a splendid view of Murcia and its environs, and spent some time, with the boy's help, in orientating ourselves. The wide plain, or *huerta*, which stretches away to the more distant mountains, is richly cultivated, and is, of course, artificially irrigated. Many palms, orange-trees, lemons, vines, and carobs flourish here, and there are mulberry-trees in profusion, the province of Murcia being noted for its silkworm industry. The rocky peak of Monte Agudo is seen occupying a prominent position to the north-west. On the opposite side of the picture is seen a small mountain range with the pilgrimage church of Fuensanta standing on a narrow ledge. This is within easy driving distance of Murcia, and we visited it the following day.

Inside the cathedral the interesting eighteenth-century choir stalls claimed our attention. These are of walnut and are extraordinarily well carved. The lower panels represent scenes from the Old and New Testaments and the modelling is life-like and vivid; the upper panels consist of a series of rather dull saints. In the Capilla



MURCIA

THE CASTLE OF MONTE AGUDO

Mayor we were shown the casket which contains the heart and intestines of Alfonso the Wise. The man who was showing us round the building was of a dejected disposition and had his head bound round with a cloth. There were no bright remarks or little jokes from this quarter! He seemed to us to be a part of the "uncompromising" attitude of Murcia towards life in general. Finally his mental depression becoming more acute, he abandoned us, —without even waiting for a *propina*—and another individual, hardly more attractive, stepped into the breach. We were taken into the Sacristy, where are housed some wonderful *custodias*, set with pearls, emeralds and rubies, and also many other treasures. It is only these special objects of art that appeal to the traveller, as the cathedral itself has no beauty to invite one to linger.

The women of Murcia are reputed to be very beautiful, but it must be confessed that we saw no specially good types during our visit. We saw nothing to compare with the dignity, grace, and beauty of the women of Seville. The young girls seemed to us to be singularly unattractive with their closely bobbed hair (alas, for the glossy black tresses which are such an ornament to a Spanish woman!), their flesh-coloured stockings, short frocks, and rather bold manners. If these young ladies could realize that would-be Paris fashions do not suit them—more especially when combined with a Spanish mantilla—and would dress in a more suitable way, they might recapture some of their natural charm.

Needless to say, the noise and animation of the streets never ceased till the small hours of the morning. In the café opposite our hotel the conversation roared with the sound of Niagara, hour after hour, without a moment's interval. We were reminded of the remark of a rather querulous old English lady apropos of her loquacious

daughter, "Whatever *does* she find to talk about all the time?" Surely the power of being able to converse for some eighteen hours out of the twenty-four is a remarkable gift!

As we wandered through the crowded streets we used to amuse ourselves by conning over the principal professions in Spain. If you are not a priest the probability is that you are a soldier. Failing this, you may perhaps keep a barber's shop with an ever-open door, and spend long happy hours in shaving swarthy customers; or you may sell flowers in the street—for this is an occupation by no means despised by men; or, lastly, you may be an itinerant bootblack, or a seller of lottery tickets—these last two evidently the most paying of all professions, judging from the number of their votaries. Of course, one can always have a donkey and little cart and sell water for a living; while walking beside the huge earthenware water-pots, which are cleverly arranged in the cart, one is at any rate always sure of looking highly picturesque.

Great ox-wagons used to come rumbling into the town with country produce, the driver walking in front of his two milk-white beasts to direct them. It used to surprise us to find how well the Spanish towns were kept. Considering the lack of water, and the numbers of animals—goats, mules, horses, oxen—that daily pass through the streets, the cleanliness is remarkable.

It is well known that the province of Murcia is one of the hottest regions in Europe, and the heat in the town was certainly very great. In the morning we managed to stay out of doors till one o'clock and suffered no ill effects, but in the afternoon we dared not venture out before half-past three.

One of the motives of our visit was a wish to see some of the works of Zarcillo, the famous woodcarver. This

native of Murcia—who is also known as Salcillo—lived in the eighteenth century, and managed to produce works of art at a time when Spain was going through a period of great decadence in such matters.

Zarcillo's best studies are to be seen in the small Church of Ermita de Jesús. The first one we were shown was the most impressive. This was *La Cena* (The Last Supper). When we entered the side-chapel and found ourselves in the presence of thirteen more than life-size wooden figures who were seated round a dining-table, we were for the moment completely taken aback. The custodian, however, urged us to pass up the little staircase which was at one end of the room so that we might obtain a better view. This we did, and now found ourselves on a level with the figures. It must be explained that this series of *pasos*, or processional figures, are mounted on large stands, and (by means of long poles) are carried on men's shoulders in the processions through the streets on Good Friday.

When we stood on the small platform at the top of the flight of steps, we were facing down the length of the table and in full view of the group. The table is covered with an ordinary white cloth, and the twelve disciples are seated six on each side. At the end is the figure of the Saviour, with His hands held out, and all heads are turned towards Him to listen to His words. The Apostle John, who sits at the left hand of Our Lord, and half-leaning towards Him, alone has his head bowed down as though in overwhelming grief. The central figure is full of dignity, and the gestures and attitudes of the disciples are life-like to a degree. There is a feeling of awe and solemnity about the whole group which is most impressive.

The figures are painted, and the expression on the faces —with their realistic colouring—is very striking. There is much character-study in the heads, and the face of the

Beloved Apostle is very beautiful. It is strange that the colouring of the woodcarving does not jar as much as one would think. Spanish artists have always had a craving for painting any material with which they are working, be it wood or stone—many of the old stone carvings in the churches still bearing traces of the original colouring. If the artist's love of realism would stop there, one would not mind, but when carved figures have real hair fastened on and are dressed in real clothes the effect is painful. Nevertheless, the other groups of Zarcillo—"Scenes from the Passion"—are deeply impressive and extraordinarily well done. The faces are always full of expression and the attitudes natural and life-like. In *El Prendimiento* (The Betrayal) the figure of Christ breathes the very spirit of humility and resignation, while that of Judas gives one the feeling of treachery and cunning triumphant.

One or two of the *pasos*, notably "The Scourging" and "Christ Falling," are so terribly realistic that it is impossible to look at them. These groups remind one very much of those on the Sacro Monte at Varallo in Italy, though the comparison is not a very apt one, as the Italian scenes are done by different artists and at widely varying dates.

The following day we went to the Church of San Miguel to see a famous *retablo* by Zarcillo. This is of gilt and is of enormous size. It is in such a florid, over-ornamented style, however, and is altogether in such bad taste, that we felt it as an anticlimax after seeing the *pasos*. Accordingly we firmly decided *not* to visit the Church of San Juan, where the guide-book promised us "two uncompromisingly realistic busts by Zarcillo".

We had a pleasant drive one afternoon to the Church of Fuensanta (situated on the mountain of the same name). We crossed the bridge, the Puente Viejo, over the Segura, and drove through a newer part of the town before reaching

the country. We were interested in noticing that the numerous mulberry-trees which we passed were almost denuded of leaves; it seems incredible that a large tree can live through even a part of the year when it only possesses a handful of leaves. Surely the silkworms here are unnecessarily greedy!

The convent Church of Fuensanta is beautifully situated on a shelf on the hill-side. From the terrace there is a lovely view of Murcia, the *huerta*, and the mountains beyond; but we found the church itself contained little of interest. What struck us as curious, however, was the fact that the realistic Virgin above the altar was standing on a crescent moon, thus reminding one of Murillo's famous picture.

There is a spring with "sacred water" at the convent, and as the heat was very great we asked if we might taste it. When we drank it, however, we found it tepid and not specially good. This was rather a disappointment, as we had vivid recollections of a draught of crystal-pure water, cold as ice, drawn from the sacred well at Monte Pellegrino in Sicily. On both occasions we were visiting a pilgrimage church on a blazingly hot day and longed for something to quench our thirst. In this case we were not even shown the well, but had to take the water on trust. It was far otherwise in Sicily; there the sacred spring was in the church itself, which is built into a cave in the rock, and the water was kept absolutely cold and pure by never being exposed to the fierce rays of a sub-tropical sun.

Reviewing our impressions of Murcia during the drive home, we decided that on the whole it was too "uncompromising". The cathedral was baroque, the excessive staring in the streets to which we were subjected when walking was unpleasant, and the hotel was squalid in the extreme. There is a touch of the "glamour of the

East" certainly, but not sufficient to tempt one to make a prolonged stay. It was chiefly the defects of the hotel, however, that made us more than content to pack up our belongings and prepare to seek the Blue Bird in another place.

CHAPTER XIII

JÁTIVA

THE home of the Borgias! One thinks instinctively of feasting, of splendour, of luxurious living. We were on the eve of visiting this ancient Spanish town —called also San Felipe de Játiva, and formerly Xativa— and vague visions of a Borgian banquet helped to sustain our drooping spirits. We had come from Murcia, leaving that city at a comparatively early hour. At Alicante we had had to change stations, driving across the town to the *Estación de Madrid*. Here we hoped to book right through to Játiva via the junction station of La Encina, where the Madrid to Valencia expresses stop. The booking-clerk told us, however, that he could only give us tickets as far as La Encina, and that there we would have to re-book to Játiva. This was rather a blow, as we knew there was very little time at the junction between the arrival of the Alicante train and the departure of the one which we were due to take. When our train-load had disembarked at La Encina we found ourselves part of an immense queue which stood waiting at the booking-office. So much for a country where many of the trains only run three times a week! A large stock of patience is required at a Spanish railway station. Kilometric tickets are much in use; these yellow books filled with tiny coupons are a convenience in many ways and allow of economical travelling, but they entail much calculation

and arduous scissor-work on the part of the clerk. While the interminable snippings were going on behind the counter the Valencia express had arrived—the porter had safely deposited our luggage in the train, and there was every indication that we would still be standing in the queue while our suit-cases were whirled away to Valencia. But finally the last coupon fluttered down—it was *our* turn for tickets—and a few moments later we were in the train and speeding off to Játiva. Soon we were indulging in the luxury of tea in a restaurant-car. We had had scant food throughout the day, as there had been neither time nor opportunity for a midday meal.

It was almost seven o'clock when we reached Játiva. Here we had another long wait, as a porter had to be dispatched to find a vehicle to convey our luggage. At long last this arrived, and in the gathering gloom we drove up the steep road which leads from the station and through the quaint narrow streets till we were deposited at the Renaissance house which was apparently our hotel. There was no signboard hung up nor any indication that it was a *fonda*, but we accepted everything in good faith, as one soon learns to do in Spain. Yes, our post card booking rooms had arrived and we were expected. We passed through the arched entrance into a large open courtyard with a fountain plashing in the centre. To the right was a broad stone staircase leading up to rooms above. Our room was low, but large and airy, with whitewashed walls, red-tiled floor, and great wooden beams projecting from the ceiling. Off this room opened the two *alcobas* side by side, Spanish fashion, and one of them contained a small window which overlooked the *patio* below. There was another long wait for dinner. We sat in the courtyard enjoying the warm evening air and the delicious sense of coolness which the splashing of the fountain seemed to give. An hour slipped away; still no Borgian banquet.

At last towards nine o'clock the door of the large dining-room was thrown open. We found ourselves in a long lofty room, the walls and ceiling of which were in a sad state of dilapidation. In the centre of the wall opposite the row of windows which looked on the courtyard a tap and basin were fitted; a towel and soap were close at hand, and we were entertained at seeing all the guests in turn go up to wash their hands before sitting down to dine. It must be mentioned to complete the picture that the room was filled with some thousands of flies, whose dogged determination in attacking the food was not to be easily thwarted. The white cloth on our small table had seen better days, but we consoled ourselves by saying that at any rate everything was *muy antiguo* (very old); perhaps this very room had witnessed many a Borgian banquet, and a few remains left over from the fifteenth or the sixteenth century were only a part of the charm. One lady brought with her a small and very active monkey which sat on the back of her chair and shared her food. This helped out our visualization of Renaissance days; we sighed for a gorgeous page-boy, a negro-slave, or even a falcon.

The soup was a slight disappointment, but the dish of boiled pea-pods which followed it raised our hopes. These were dashed to the ground when the next course, a dish of the well-known *arroz de Valencia*, was placed before us. This usually consists of rice, meat, fish, and vegetables mixed up together, the whole being flavoured with garlic and coloured with saffron. In this case, however, the rice was surrounded by a circle of snails, the shells still on them and their horns well stuck out to cause intimidation. There were other ingredients as well as snails and rice; but we had not the courage to investigate farther, the substance resembling pieces of bootlace especially striking terror to our hearts. But at all events we had

excellent wine, bread and fruit, and we were in the midst of unique surroundings—the reason of our visit. We amused ourselves by imagining that the Borgia—or more correctly Borja—family had held feasting and revels in this very room in bygone times.

Picturing to ourselves regal banquets where the fish was served on platters of silver and the meat on dishes of gold, we crept upstairs to our whitewashed room, where we slept serenely after our Barmecide feast.

Years ago Richard Ford described the climate of Játiva as "delicious", and ever since the word has been used by travellers visiting this old town. Whether it is a true description or not may be disputed, but certain it is that we awoke feeling thoroughly invigorated and eager to begin our wanderings. Unable to sleep any longer, we rose at 6.30 and went out for a stroll before coffee was served. "Before breakfast" sounds commendably early, but it is not really so in Spain, as that traveller is lucky indeed who can persuade his landlord to produce a cup—or glass—of coffee before 8.30. This particular morning the weary waiting seemed a greater hardship than usual, as the sparkling sunshine and fresh, bracing air were calling us to action. Our walk took us to the *Ovalo*, an open square having in the centre a fountain containing twenty-five spouts of water.

After seeing this we wandered along the *Calle de Moncada* and caught charming peeps into enclosed courtyards. There are some fine old houses in this street and all have *patios*, very much in the style of the Seville houses. There is always a fountain in the centre, surrounded by pots of ferns or palms, the fresh green foliage and jet of silver water contrasting with the comparative gloom of the courtyard.

Finally we returned to our *fonda*, where we spent the rest of the time until coffee was brought out in watching

JATIVA

A GENERAL VIEW

the goldfish chasing each other round the basin of the fountain. When we mentioned the fact that we intended visiting the castle, we were told that probably we would not be admitted unless we had a written *permiso* from the owner, who at that moment was in Valencia. This sounded discouraging, but when we were further told that, while the people of Játiva were not allowed to enter the castle, strangers were frequently privileged in this respect, we plucked up courage.

The two-peaked hill on which the twin *castillos* stand rises up abruptly just beyond the town. We set off in the direction of the *Ovalo*, then turned sharply to the right up a steep and narrow street which led us out of the town. Soon we came to a rope-walk, and having passed this we were out in the open country.

It is a charming walk all the way to the *castillo*; we sauntered slowly up the road, stopping to pluck the wild flowers, which were everywhere growing in profusion, or sitting down to admire the distant view. The heat, even at this early hour, was very great, but the air was fresh and invigorating. Tall purple snapdragons and a lovely mauve convolvulus were growing by the road-side, and claret-coloured poppies were clustered here and there in clumps. We passed many olives and carob-trees. Up above us rose the steep and rocky hill clothed with masses of prickly-pear. Below us lay Játiva, straggling down to its lowest point—the railway station. Beyond was the wide, flat plain, with here and there an isolated mountain peak rising up in some unlikely place, its summit crowned by a ruined castle. Northwards we could trace a river, twisting and twining through the *huerta*—a real live river this time, not a dry river-bed.

The plain largely consisted of acres and acres of flooded rice-fields. These square patches of cultivation, with their shimmering surface, give a peculiar character to

the landscape; they are neither lakes nor dry land, but have something of the quality of both.

A great rocky hill with a picturesque castle on top rises sheer up from the *vega*, and has the appearance of an island whose shores are lapped by the still waters of the rice-fields. Almost due northwards from Játiva runs the railway line to Valencia. It cuts right across the dead level plain and the rice-fields lie close up to the line on either side. When we were in the train next day travelling to Valencia we had an opportunity of seeing these flooded squares at close quarters. Bare-legged peasants in rows were standing in the water, stooping over the slender green blades of rice and pulling them up; then tying them in bundles, which were afterwards carted away for transplanting. The patches where all the rice was gone were being ploughed up, a primitive form of plough drawn by a single horse being used. Other squares which had already been ploughed and from which the water had been drawn off presented the appearance of lakes of liquid mud.

When we had passed a sharp bend in the road and ascended a little higher—the view of the *huerta* and of a distant range of mountains becoming more extensive with every step we took—we found ourselves at a massive gateway, the entrance to the *castillo*. We clanged a great bell and waited expectantly. Presently a very small and frightened child opened the iron-studded door half an inch and inquired what we wanted. We replied by asking if we might see the *castillo*. "Have you got a *permiso*?" "Alas, we did not know in time that it was necessary!" "Well, I am sorry but you can't come in." We pleaded that we were foreigners, that we had come from far, far away with the sole object of seeing the famous *castillo* and that we were leaving Játiva next day. "Wait a moment then, until I ask my *madre*." The door was shut

to again and we waited once more. After a few minutes it was thrown open by a pleasant-looking young woman, who at the end of a brief conversation said we might enter and wander where we pleased.

The modern house, with its machicolations, which is built somewhat after the style of an old castle, is near the entrance, and is the residence of the present owner. We passed this and struck into a charming rocky path which led up the steep hill-side. Cactuses had everywhere wedged themselves in amongst the stones, and their yellow flowers blended with the yellow nasturtiums which were growing in all directions. One picturesque path led to another, a Moorish tiled one this time, and every turn in the track brought us to some fresh view-point.

Soon we had reached a place where we could see over the other side of the hill, and this gave us quite a different vista. Now we were looking due south, and we could trace the road and the railway which led to Alcóy. On this side the Castle hill rises almost precipitously from the plain, and as its surface is composed of sharp stones and dense thickets of prickly-pear, one would think that its position was unassailable. Yet the ground on which the twin *castillos* stand has been the scene of bitter warfare from the time of the Iberians. A unique situation of this kind was not to be lightly lost or won, and successive peoples have fought fiercely to capture it, and, having made it theirs, they straightway constructed their own buildings and superimposed their new civilization on the one which had gone down before them.

The authorities consider that the site of the ruins goes back to remote times, and that the hill was occupied before the coming of the Phœnicians and Greeks to Spain. Certain it is that a fragment of an Iberian hand-mill has been recently found amongst the ruins. An old tradition says that while Hannibal was on the point of capturing

Saguntum his wife Himilice, who was a Celtiberian, bore him a son in the Castle of Játiva.

We read that in Roman times Saetabis, as Játiva used to be called, was famous for its castle and for its linen cloth. Ford says: "Its fine handkerchiefs were all the fashion at Rome, and are praised by Pliny and Martial as equal to those of Tyre, from whence the art was introduced". There seems to be no doubt that the Phœnicians were at one time in possession here. There are many evidences of the Roman occupation; walls, towers, reservoirs, and fortifications are still in existence, though much ruined of course.

Leaving classical times, we come next to the Visigothic period. These new invaders swarmed over the Pyrenees and entered Spain early in the fifth century. At Játiva their domination lasted from 483–711, in which year Spain's next conquerors, the Moors, arrived. They entered the country from the south and quickly carried all before them. In 714 a certain Arab chief captured "without difficulty" the Castle of Játiva. "For 500 years it suffered all the vicissitudes of Arab Spain. It belonged first to Toledo, then to Córdoba, lastly to Valencia." The Moors left many traces of their civilization; constantly one finds their flat red bricks built into walls, or forming paths up the hill-side. We saw their well and their reservoir, and the ruined towers, turrets, and walls prove the extent and richness of Xativa, as they named it.

Probably in 1244 (but there is some dispute about the date) James I of Aragon reconquered Játiva for Spain. He restored the Castillo Menor—the other twin is the Castillo Mayor—and made *su Játiva querida*, a powerful factor in the land. Don Jaime el Conquistador, as he is called in Spain, was born in Montpellier in 1208. This fact was of interest to us, as we spent a couple of nights in that delightful French town on our homeward journey.

As we wandered amongst the extensive ruins we came upon the prison, and stopped to read the inscription which was carved on the stone above the entrance: "There were prisoners confined here from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries." Then followed a list of illustrious people who had died within its walls. Lastly comes the touching phrase—"And here the Duke of Calabria, Don Fernando de Aragon, heir to the kingdom of Naples, wasted the ten best years of his youth in unjust captivity, 1512–1522. ("*Y aqui consumió los díez años mejores de su juventud, en injusta reclusión, el Duque de Calabria, D. Fernando de Aragón, heredero del reinó de Nápoles.*")

The *Sala del Duque*, as it is called, is immediately over the prison, and from its windows a magnificent view of the country is seen. The unfortunate prince, confined in "honourable captivity" in this room on the top of a hill, must have felt like a bird in a cage which, for reasons of humanity, is hung out in the open. It would probably bring him small consolation to know that Gonzalo de Córdoba, the Great Captain, to whom he had surrendered, repented of his treachery in betraying him, and is reported to have said on his death-bed that he had only three regrets in life, and one of them was his breach of faith with Ferdinand, Duke of Calabria. A second was his broken word to Cæsar Borja, son of Alexander VI, whom he tricked in Sicily (1504) and then imprisoned in Spain for two years. The notorious Cæsar was created Archbishop of Valencia in 1492 and later became a cardinal.

The Borja family originally belonged to Borja, in the province of Saragossa; but they moved to Játiva, and in this town several notable members of the family were born. Alphonso Borja, who became Pope Calixtus III, was born here in 1378. When Pope he presented the city of his birth with a handsome *custodía*; this is kept in the Sacristy of La Seo. Rodrigo Borja, who afterwards

became Pope Alexander VI (father of Cæsar), was born here in 1431. The wealth and power of the family was a thing to be feared in those days. Five Borjas in succession held the See of Valencia, a city some twenty or thirty miles distant. Another Borja, San Francisco, the well-known Spanish saint, was born at Gandia, a town not far away, in the year 1510. He became Fourth Duke of Gandia and died in the town of his birth in 1572. A brother of his, Diego de Borja, was for a time a prisoner in Játiva Castle.

The prison, where various unfortunates spent so many years of their life, is a fearsome place, small, perfectly dark, with immensely thick walls. A low door leads into it, and at each side of this, a few feet from the ground, a tiny, square-sided aperture connects the prison itself with the guard-room. These long holes are presumably meant as channels to push the food through, though why there should be two it is difficult to say.

The thickness of the walls may be gauged by the fact that an umbrella thrust along reached nowhere near the end. The outer chamber—the guard-room—has a delightful little window, just a narrow slit it is true, but a glorious view of the country, far below, may be seen through the few inches of daylight. Perhaps the unhappy Duke, in his *sala* just above the prison, consoled himself by thinking that at any rate his lot was infinitely to be preferred to that of the perishing prisoner in the dark cell beneath his feet.

As we were preparing to leave the castle the lady of the house, who was conversing with her friends on the lawn. came forward to speak to us. After chatting a moment or two, asking our nationality and a few other questions, she inquired if we would like to see the view from the castle windows. Gladly assenting, we followed her into the house, where, ushering us into a large, handsome room,

she threw back the *persiennes* and we saw beneath us a truly wonderful scene of richly cultivated *huerta* and distant mountain range.

When the time came to say *adios* we were kindly presented with an interesting illustrated booklet, giving a full account of the famous *Castillo de Játiva*. Many of the facts contained in this chapter are taken from this pamphlet.

On our homeward walk we stopped to visit the little Hermitage Church of San Feliú, which is a short distance above the town. Just outside the church and on the terrace on which it stands is an old Moorish well. We could not find the white marble *bénitier* of which Ford speaks, but later, when we were in the Church of La Seo, we saw an exceedingly fine font, and concluded that it had been brought down from La Ermita.

The heat that afternoon was so great that we dared not go out till 4.30. When we had plucked up courage, however, to face the sun, we found shade and charm in the Glorietta, a small park near the station. We sat under the Castillian cinnamon-trees and enjoyed the beautiful views which we had even from this lower portion of the town. The air in this part is kept cool and fresh by the numerous jets of water which are constantly playing.

We strolled through the streets and arrived at the little *Plaza del Españoleto*, which has a statue of Ribera in the centre. The famous Spanish painter was born at Játiva in the year 1588. He studied in Italy, and was there usually called *Lo Spagnoletto*, or "The Little Spaniard". His sombre pictures, often of religious subjects, are of a rather gloomy nature; but one of his, "Saint Mary of Egypt," arrested our attention when we were in the Picture Gallery at Montpellier. St. Mary, better known as Mary Magdalene, fled to Egypt, and to expiate her sins lived in a cave and endured the greatest hardship and misery until her death,

or so the story goes. Near the shelter of a rock she cowers, looking out of the canvas with beseeching, red-rimmed eyes; her scanty hair falls matted round her head, the hands are worn and scratched with toil. But her sufferings are mental rather than physical, and the ascetic old-young face haunts the passer-by with its wistful appeal for Divine forgiveness.

CHAPTER XIV

TARRAGONA

THE long journey from Játiva to Tarragona was rather fatiguing. We were up at six o'clock, as we had to catch the night express from Madrid to Valencia; this train stops at Játiva at an early hour in the morning, but only picks up travellers who intend going beyond Valencia; those who wish to go no farther than this being obliged to take an even earlier train. Just before we left the hotel our landlady was very pessimistic on the subject of our being allowed to travel by the express, and recommended us to consult the station-master. This we did, and were then directed to the lady in charge of the booking-office. It is rare to see a Spanish woman in a responsible position at a railway station, and we were suitably impressed when we were ushered into the presence of this handsome, capable official with her magisterial manner. After there had been a little explanation and a little waiting we were told, to our joy, that we might travel by the express.

The train was extremely crowded all the way to Tarragona, and though we were fortunate in having comfortable corner-seats, we were surrounded by such mountains of luggage that we felt nearly smothered under it. One of our travelling companions was an American lady, and it amused us to hear her expressing astonishment and indignation at the narrowness of the streets in Murcia. "But why," she persisted, "*why* make them so narrow?

In San Francisco that sort of thing is not *allowed*. We would never *dream* of having our streets *less* than 60 feet wide!" At last the long hot journey came to an end, and at four o'clock we duly arrived at Tarragona. The railway porter who came forward to take our suit-cases addressed us in a flood of fluent English, at which we felt much hurt! This was not the language we had come to hear! However, that was both the beginning and the end of our own tongue, and it was one of the few occasions on which we had cause for complaint in this respect.

The *Fonda de Paris*, where we stayed, proved to be a most comfortable little hotel with excellent cooking. Here, once more, we had a typically Spanish bedroom with its twin *alcobas*. In this case the alcoves were shut off from the rest of the room by a glass partition and sliding glass doors, so that we rather felt as though we were sleeping inside a tomato-house. It seemed unheard-of luxury to have hot and cold water laid on in one's bedroom and to be in a hotel where hot baths could be had for the asking. So much for creature comforts.

With reference to the town itself, Tarragona is charmingly situated on the Mediterranean. The railway station and harbour are near together, and, as this part is rather sordid and uninteresting, the traveller who only passes through in the train has but a poor idea of the beauty of Tarragona. The bulk of the town, however, lies in a superb position about 550 feet above sea level. From the famous *Balcon del Mediterraneo* glorious views of the coast are obtained in both directions; sandy bays or rocky promontories stretch away as far as the eye can see, while just beneath us is the blue Mediterranean with its absolutely clear, pellucid water. This small but charming promenade is planted with palms and well supplied with seats, and is a favourite resort for pedestrians either by day or in the

evening. When the dusk was beginning to fall the scene was specially beautiful ; one by one the lamps in the light-houses, far or near, were lit up, while twinkling stars appeared in the huge expanse of sky. Down below, the big bathing establishment was being shut up for the night, while fishing-boats, set with great brown sails, were drawing in to the shore. The air was warm and soft with no hint of the cruel *tramontana*, that biting wind of Catalonia (similar to the dreaded *mistral* of Provence) which we had experienced to a very faint degree some two or three weeks earlier in Gerona.

The great glory of Tarragona is its mediæval cathedral. This splendid building is situated in the highest part of the town and is approached by a wide flight of steps (reminiscent of Gerona in this respect). Before entering it we stopped to admire the western front with its three portals, a large central one in the Gothic style with a smaller Romanesque one at each side. The principal one, with its carved saints in niches, is particularly fine. Nine of the best figures represent the Apostles, and were executed by a certain sculptor named Maestro Bartolomé about the year 1280. Doubtless they were all saints and martyrs, but they seem to take a thoroughly humorous view of life notwithstanding. The remaining figures were carved about the year 1375, and are stiff and poor compared with the others. The wrought-iron work (sixteenth century) on the huge doors is a delight—the knobs, hinges, or knockers on close inspection proving to be a perfect menagerie of quaint animals, with queer heads and tails, claws and tongues, and other appurtenances. As we were gazing up at a fine carved sarcophagus which is built in over the south doorway, we noticed a printed bill fastened on the church door, and we decided we had better read it before entering. This was to say that every child over five must have her dress to her knees, and if over twelve

her dress must reach the ankles; further (here our hearts sank) no lady must enter the church unless her dress came to her throat and the sleeves were down to the wrist. *Ay de mi!* How hard it is for the sinner to enter the strait gate and narrow way! Our black dresses had half-sleeves and were slightly rounded at the neck! We had been rebuked once by a priest for having elbow-sleeves and had no wish to repeat the experience. Sighing heavily, we returned reluctantly to our hotel, where we changed into travelling-costumes and steeled ourselves to the thought of being frizzled during the hottest part of the day.

The interior of the cathedral is grand and impressive—a place to linger in and to return to again and again. In style it is simple and severe, much of the building having been "executed at the end of the twelfth century and during the first half of the thirteenth century". So says George Street, who gives a full and enthusiastic description of it in his *Gothic Architecture in Spain* (1865). The church has a long history, dating back to Roman times. In the first instance a Temple to Jupiter stood on the spot and remains of this are incorporated in the east end of the building. Later a Moorish mosque was built on the ruins of the temple, and fragments of this work are still to be seen, notably a lovely little window with horse-shoe arch and Arabesque tracery, which is built into the west wall of the cloisters.

In 1089 Pope Urban II sent a letter to the faithful, recommending them to assist in the restoration of the church, which had just been wrested from the Moors. The building was continued at various dates after this. George Street considers that the eastern part of the church was begun about the year 1131, and that the rest is somewhat later. "It is all just of that transitional period in which, whilst the pointed arch was used where great

TARRAGONA

A DOOR OF THE CATHEDRAL

strength was required, the round arch was nevertheless retained for the smaller openings in the walls."

The beautiful Romanesque cloisters are entered from a portal just beyond the north transept. It is a very lovely doorway with a central column, which has a quaintly carved capital of the Nativity and the Adoration of the Holy Child. In the tympanum above the Saviour is represented with the emblems of the four Evangelists, two on each side. The carving of the capitals both here and in the rest of the cloisters is delightfully done, and is in many instances full of the richest detail. Some of the capitals have simple foliage only, but in others quaint animals and figures are seen which are usually depicted in a spirit of fun and frolic. A good example of this is the carving on an abacus of the Rats and their Captive Cat; the cat feigns death in the first instance, only to jump up and devour its captors in the next chapter.

The cloisters are charming with their Romanesque arches and slender marble columns. We spent a long time here enjoying the peaceful scene. True, our meditations were interrupted from time to time. Once a beggar woman accosted us and asked for *una limosna* in such a decided, business-like manner that we felt we were being dunned for an overdue bill. Her place was taken a few minutes later by an aged man bent on the same errand. Mischievous choir-boys offered to show us the carving of the Rats and the Cat, and seemed unwilling to believe that we had already discovered it for ourselves. Lastly there were the omnipresent cats. Who will take pity on the thousands of unwanted cats in Spain? It is apparently no one's business either to care for them or to put an end to them. They swarm everywhere—mangy cats, hungry cats, diseased cats, starved cats, cats of every colour and in all stages of decrepitude. An army of them rushed into the cloisters, and made the air so hideous with their

cries that we were glad to escape into the church. Would no band of rats appear so that one unfortunate animal at least might be removed? Some Spanish cats certainly are well cared for. In the cathedral at Gerona we were amused to see a dignified tabby walking sedately up the nave while Mass was going on. This was evidently a favoured pet, for later in the day, when we went into the Sacristy, the priest had to stoop to caress the cat before he could attend to us.

There is much to see inside the cathedral. Close to the *coro* is the elaborate tomb of King James I of Aragon (*El Rey don Jaime el Conquistador*), who died in 1276. This was originally in the church at Poblet, but after the destruction of the monastery in the nineteenth century the tomb was removed to Tarragona, where it was restored.

There is an interesting stone pietà in the nave. It was carved in the year 1494 and is deeply venerated. The figures bear traces of the original colouring and are realistic in treatment. The body of the Saviour is lying in a glass coffin, at each end of which stands a man. Behind stand five weeping women, the central one being the Virgin. We saw this subject later, treated in very much the same manner, in the cathedral of that half-Spanish, half-French town, Perpignan.

There is a fine alabaster *retablo* in the Capilla Mayor with scenes from the life of Santa Tecla, the patron saint of Tarragona and a disciple of St. Paul's, the holy lady who, tradition says, followed him about during his missionary wanderings in Spain.

Besides all the treasures of the cathedral there is a good museum which opens off the cloisters and which contains a vast collection of carvings, stone pietàs, *retablos*, enamels, painted Virgins, and other works of religious art which have been found in the district.

The little Romanesque church of Santa Tecla is just

outside the cathedral. It is said to be one of the oldest churches in Spain, and was restored early in the twelfth century. It is a tiny barn-like structure with some interesting Romanesque carvings. It is apparently kept locked as a rule, but we gained admittance at the hour when choir-boys were receiving a singing lesson from their master. A wheezy old harmonium was being played, and the "little monkeys", as choir-boys are called in Spain, were practising in their strident, high-pitched voices. (It might be remarked in passing that Spanish boys seem to have peculiarly unmusical voices, and if we stopped sometimes in a church to listen to the choir-boys singing we were invariably disappointed.) Papers were littered about on the floor, rubbish was piled in one corner, and the ancient little building had a melancholy air of general neglect.

There was so much to see and to do in Tarragona that we never found time to visit the other interesting old church, that of San Pablo. Apart from ecclesiastical buildings there are many Roman remains. Tarraco, as it was called, was one of the earliest strongholds of Rome in Spain. The Cyclopean walls, which are believed to be prehistoric, were made use of by the Romans, who superimposed their own masonry. These curious walls extend for a considerable distance round the town, and are one of the "lions" of Tarragona. The gigantic blocks of stone of which they are made remind one of the circle at Stonehenge.

The amphitheatre was partially dismantled in the fifteenth century, as its stones were required to build the eastern mole. It now appears to be a general rubbish-heap, and its condition does not tempt the traveller to linger, although the situation on the seaward slope of the hill is attractive.

Pontius Pilate is traditionally said to have been a native

of Tarragona, and one of the Roman buildings—now used as a prison—is called *Castillo de Pilatos*. This is believed to have been the palace of the Emperor Augustus, who spent the winter of 26 B.C. in this city. He came here to rest after the labours of his Cantabrian campaign. The wars were over, the Empire was at peace with all the world, and at Tarraco the victorious Augustus issued his decree announcing the closing of the Temple of Janus.

At this time Togata Tarraco, or Imperial Tarraco, as it came to be called, enjoyed the very greatest prosperity, and its population is said to have been more than a million. From being an important Iberian town the Emperor raised it to be the capital of the whole province, which henceforth was known by the name of Hispania Tarraconensis. The climate of Tarraco became renowned, and its wines were greatly prized and sought after. We read that with its flax, silk, and other industries the seaport came to be one of the richest of the Empire.

Apart from the numerous evidences of Roman occupation in the town itself there are one or two monuments in the district which are well worthy of a visit. The most interesting of these is the *Acueducto Romano*, or "Devil's Bridge" (*Puente del Diablo*), as it is locally called.

We had had our first glimpse of this from the top of the Roman tower at the Archbishop's Palace, which is situated not far from the cathedral and is thus in the highest part of the town. We ascended the tower by a pitch-dark, winding staircase. "*No hay de luz*" ("There is no light"), we complained to the youth who was conducting us. "*Es una luz negativa,*" was his laughing rejoinder as he darted up the stairway ahead of us and threw open a small door at the top.

When we stood out on the flat roof we found a marvellous view awaiting us on all sides. Just beneath us was a part of the Cyclopean walls on to which the Roman Tower

abuts. Near at hand towered the cathedral, hemmed in by other buildings; but what attracted us most was the open country-side, which stretched away for miles to the west, the north, and the east, the sea lying to the south.

Our guide explained the various features of the landscape, and we filled in any gaps in his information with such scanty knowledge as we possessed. The Roman Aqueduct was the first object which was pointed out; it is a mile or two distant from Tarragona, and we found it rather difficult to distinguish it in a landscape where everything was new and strange, especially as its stonework closely resembles in colour the rocks which are round about.

Much farther away was a grey patch of houses, which, we were told, was the town of Reus. Two notable nineteenth-century Spaniards were born here: Fortuny, the painter (1841–74), who is also buried here, and General Prim (1814–70), who was created Count of Reus in 1843 in recognition of his services during the Revolutionary Wars.

The village of Santas Creus, with its ruined monastery, was also indicated to us, but our guide informed us that it was *muy dificil* to visit this from Tarragona, as the trains to Valls, the nearest station, were few and far between.

The type of scenery interested us as being utterly different from that of Southern Spain, which was still fresh in our minds. "Quite European," was the expression frequently on our lips while we were in Catalonia—this was somewhat illogical, as we had never been out of Europe. Nevertheless, the richly wooded country and the gentle slopes of the distant hills had an almost familiar appearance when contrasted with the desert tracts of Murcia.

The short excursion to the Roman Aqueduct made an enjoyable afternoon's trip. We motored to it, as there seemed to be no other way of reaching it except on foot,

and we did not relish the idea of walking along a dusty road under a blazing sun. The aqueduct is approached from the high road by a charming path, which ascends rather steeply from the right; it is situated in private property, and visitors are requested not to wander from the path or to pluck the flowers or shrubs. We left our car at the gate, and after a pleasant stroll of about fifteen minutes we found ourselves underneath the Devil's Bridge.

At this point it spans a sharp dip in the hill-side; to the south it disappears into the maquis and is lost to sight, while the view of the northern end is blocked by the rising ground. The aqueduct, which is in a good state of preservation, consists of two tiers of arches, and is constructed of huge blocks of grey stone. We stood beneath it, and gazed up to try to realize its height and strength; but, mindful of the polite notices, we were unable to scramble about and view it from different angles.

Seen against an azure blue sky and with its great piers planted in the sweetly smelling maquis, the aqueduct is a striking feature in the landscape, yet it must be admitted that it lacks the dramatic situation of the Pont du Gard in Provence. There the aqueduct spans a deep gorge, through whose steep and rocky sides rushes the clear green water of the Gard. From the third and topmost tier one can look down at the river far beneath, as it hurries along to join the Rhone on its race to the Mediterranean.

As we strolled slowly back towards the high road we stopped to admire the shrubs and bushes which were everywhere planted in profusion. A gardener who was working near at hand saw us and came up to pass the time of day. He talked of the various plants, and presented us with flowers and sprigs of foliage. When the time came to say *adios* we gently proffered a small *propina;* this was greeted with a vehement and voluble refusal, our friend keeping his hands firmly behind his back the

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THE ROMAN AQUEDUCT

while. A second attempt on our part met with no further success, but by the third one hand was beginning to appear slowly from behind the gardener's back; and at length, with many protestations and with a deprecatory air of, "I am only taking it to please you", he was persuaded to accept what perhaps he had been hoping for all the time.

Our other short excursion was a visit to the so-called Tomb of the Scipios. The Scipio brothers occupied Tarraco in 218 B.C., but their triumph was a short one as, some six years later, they were defeated and killed in battle by the Carthaginians. Experts consider that it is quite improbable that they are buried near Tarragona, as the scene of their death lies much farther to the south —in the province of Teruel, and, moreover, they consider that the tomb itself does not date earlier than the first century A.D. This is a matter on which learned folk may argue at leisure; let them take away a couple of hundred years if so they wish—as long as they leave us the charming setting of the tomb, the blue sky and sea, the succession of sandy bays, and the scent of the maquis all around, we shall have no reason for complaint.

The Scipio brothers, wherever they lie buried, died of honourable scars received in battle. What would the poor charioteer, whose sculptured epitaph is built into the wall of the Archbishop's Palace, have given to share their fate! His pathetic lament is well known: "Would that I had fallen in the circus rather than have died of fever!"

CHAPTER XV

THE MONASTERY OF POBLET

WE made a rather unfortunate decision when we decided to visit Poblet on June 1st. We had not realized that it was Whit-Monday—*Lúnes de Pentecostés*—and a day of *fiesta*, naturally. When we saw the long queue of Tarragona people which stretched from the booking-hall of the station out on to the roadway beyond our hearts misgave us. Were they *all* going to take return tickets to Esplugas? If so, we would not lack for company on our two-hour railway journey. Yes, all and far more, and the little train was packed from end to end. Everyone was holiday-making, and, armed with picnic baskets containing *merienda* and "leather bottéls", all were looking forward to a day *al campo*. Noise and excitement were in the air, and the roar of Catalonian voices filled the long coach in which we were travelling.

The Spanish drinking vessel just mentioned merits some description. It is a bottle made of skin, and in the act of drinking it is held up rather high and a few inches away from the mouth. The jet of wine flows direct from the spout into the drinker's mouth—that is, if you have acquired the art. If you have not, the fluid squirts all over your face and neck. We noticed a young boy drinking from one of these vessels, and the skill with which he did so—in a rocking train, too—seemed to prove it the simplest of processes. Non-experts, however, say it is by no means

as easy as it looks. The *porrón*, as it is called, is rather larger than an English rubber hot-water bag. Its origin goes back to ancient times. It is, of course, a hygienic bottle to carry on a picnic, as a whole family can drink out of it without any member touching the spout with his lips.

Our journey took us through attractive country. We passed Reus, where we crossed the Barcelona–Saragossa railway line; then later we reached the valley of the Riba. The river, the gorge, the hills were all delightful, and the railway officials were evidently determined that the passengers should be allowed sufficient time to enjoy everything to the full, judging from the interminable waits at the various stations; but at intervals our thoughts turned longingly towards a certain "green and pleasant land" where trains run at the incredible rate of sixty miles an hour.

At last we reached Esplugas, a primitive little village and the nearest station to Poblet. Here we found rows of more or less antiquated motor vehicles awaiting the arrival of the train, for the monastery is a stiff two miles away. We selected one motor-bus, or rather were selected for it, as the driver immediately recognized a willing prey and swooped down upon us. The vehicle quickly filled up with other picnickers, and, first in the field, joyous, triumphant, it thundered down into the village, then up the steep road beyond, and off on its mad race towards the ruined monastery.

Oh! the bumps and jolts and jars of that short journey! Many times we felt as if we were on the point of being hurled bodily out of the vehicle. It rolled and rocked and swayed like a ship in an angry ocean. But surely no self-respecting auto could keep steady under that torrent of conversation. The passengers, packed in as they were to far above the "Plimsoll line", shouted and

roared at each other till the noise was literally deafening. In front, the driver was almost smothered under a group of young men, who climbed in at the last minute ; how he managed to drive with all that pushing and shoving next him is a mystery. Inside the swaying vehicle the hubbub surged round us like a tempest, and we felt that the moment could not long be delayed when we would all be finally deposited in the ditch. It is difficult to exaggerate the condition of the road ; the surface consisted of large holes, deep ruts, and boulders innumerable. We had no sooner safely escaped from one chasm than we plunged into another, yet the vehicle managed to flounder on somehow, and we did all succeed in reaching Poblet safe and sound, with no bones broken. For our part we emerged from our temporary cave-dwelling feeling stunned and shattered, but none the worse for our experience. Surely, we thought, as we parted from our riotous companions, we are now in a position to understand how the extensive monastery could be destroyed—or partially so —in a single night by an enraged multitude. Our fellow-travellers of the motor-bus had all been in a state of the highest spirits and good humour—full of fun and laughter, they were merely bent on making the most of their day's enjoyment. But it was impossible not to let our thoughts wander to certain happenings some ninety or one hundred years ago, when a huge mob of infuriated people, with one word on their lips—"Destroy! Destroy!"—had stormed the monastery gates and, having forced an entrance, had done their very utmost to wreck this venerable fabric.

Just before our auto reached Poblet we passed a field of scarlet poppies—a vivid, glowing mass of colour. Did these not suggest red ruin ? When the flames leaped up around the smoking building did they burn with a brilliancy like this ? *Nec tamen consumebatur!* The monastery

still stands triumphant—ruined and deserted it is true, but a striking witness to its former greatness and prosperity.

Augustus Hare, in his *Wanderings in Spain* (1873), gives an interesting picture of Poblet at the height of its wealth and power; then follows an account of its destruction. The famous monastery, however, was apparently not destroyed in a single night, as this writer would seem to suggest; but, the work of destruction having suddenly begun, successive raids were made upon the buildings by peasants from the country round about, until a time arrived when there was nothing left to plunder. The gold on the tombs, the silver, all the precious objects within these massive walls, proved an irresistible bait to poverty-stricken people, and the monastery was not left in peace until every stone was turned up in the search for hidden riches.

The Cistercian monastery of Poblet was founded in the year 1149 by Ramon Berenguer IV, a count of Barcelona. The site of the building was the burial-place of the saintly hermit, Poblet, whose bones were miraculously revealed to the faithful by means of shining lights.

From comparatively small beginnings the monastery became rapidly richer and richer, more and more powerful. As the years went on it acquired more lands and property till its wealth was almost fabulous. The Kings of Aragon took it under their especial protection, endowed it, built their own palace within its convent walls, and made it into a royal burial-place. Successive monarchs, worn out with affairs of State, used to come to this lovely spot to enjoy a period of rest and quiet. It became a matter of honour for a king to be buried here, and elaborate and costly tombs filled the convent church. So rich did the monastery become that in the height of its prestige only true blue-blood aristocrats were admitted as novices.

Every monk had his own two servants, this apart from the army of menials, artisans, barbers, and workmen of all kinds who lived within the gates. The monks rode on milk-white mules, which were procured in Spain at enormous cost. As to the standard of luxury within the convent walls, only the very best was good enough for these simple followers of Christ. The famous wine, El Priorato, which was made at Poblet, was the last word in excellence. Every day fresh fish was brought over from the Atlantic, the Mediterranean variety being too tasteless to please the monkish palate.

The monastery was a community in itself. The outer portion of the huge mass of buildings contained workshops innumerable ; here worked the ironsmiths, the locksmiths, the carpenters, the painters. Here, also, were the distilleries, the hospitals, the prison, the hospice for pilgrims, the administrative office, apartments for the doctor, and the pharmacy with its garden of medicinal plants.

The magnificent library which opens off the cloisters contained books of such value as to have made it the most famous in Spain. Also opening off the cloisters is the Royal Palace. This is the *Palacio del Rey Don Martin, El Humano* (The Humble), who visited Poblet in 1397. Many illustrious personages came here to stay and graced the convent with their presence. Throughout the centuries Poblet was honoured by the ceremonial visits of kings and queens. Sometimes a monarch would come to spend Holy Week in retreat here, or, again, he might merely come for rest and recuperation. Whether *los Reyes* spent a part of their lives here or not one thing was certain —they must be buried here, and Poblet for a time was the Escorial of Aragon.

Rich, powerful, overbearing, at one time the darling of kings, always the terror of the country folk, Poblet fell, and fell swiftly. By the beginning of the nineteenth

century, and earlier, it had already fallen from the great days of its fame, and was to fall still lower. The Carlist wars had broken out, and it was said that the monks were divided amongst themselves, half being Carlists and half Royalists. This may have been true, but what was much truer was that the peasants round about had been tyrannized over for countless generations, and a point had been reached at which flesh and blood would stand it no longer. One dark night they rose in a body and, as has already been said, stormed the monastery. Armed with any weapon they could lay hands upon, they worked with fury to destroy everything within their reach. Enraged that their efforts were baffled in all directions by the solidity of the buildings, as early morning drew on they made huge fires and had the supreme satisfaction of seeing the flames leap up and devour what they had hitherto been unable to destroy.

And the monks? No blood was shed. Their lives were spared. The terrified fugitives escaped into the night and fled no man knows where. So ended Poblet the Mighty.

With these events in mind we wandered through the lovely ruins, admiring the severe beauty of the early architecture and marvelling at the extent of the monastery. The convent was, of course, added to from time to time, and the architecture is of various periods, some of the later styles being very ornate; but the most beautiful buildings open off the main cloisters and on these we concentrated. Not far away were smaller cloisters, with their adjacent rooms, which looked equally charming, but, alas! these were barred and barricaded off from the public.

The immense refectory (*refectorio*), with its flight of steps leading up to the ruined pulpit on the right, delighted us, but what interested us almost as much was the kitchen

(*cocina*) on the left. Here were the huge cauldrons for cooking, and great stone sinks for washing dishes, with sloping pipes to carry away the used water outside. Here was an enormous fireplace and ovens of all kinds; two large hatches led into the refectory next door.

These rooms are on the south side of the cloisters and also on this side is the huge *Bodega*, or storehouse for the wine—a chill dark place with a gigantic vat, deep enough when it was full, one would think, to drown a whole army of royal dukes, if need arose. But the most fascinating room is the lovely little *Sala Capitular* (Chapter House); this is the crowning jewel of the cloisters. It opens off to the east, and is entered by an exquisite Romanesque-Transition doorway. We descend a few steps and arrive in a rather low, square room, whose groined roof is supported on four slender columns with carved capitals of delicate interlacing work. Westwards we look into the cloisters through two Romanesque windows, one on either side of the doorway. Eastwards we look through three lovely windows into some other cloisters. The windows just mentioned are approached by long lines of steps or shallow seats, which run along three sides of the room. At this east end are the stone slabs covering the graves of former abbots. These stones all face east and bear effigies of the men who lie beneath, while an inscription giving details of their lives is carved round the border of the slab. This *Sala* has suffered comparatively little from the hands of the destroyers—that is to say, the carvings are not hopelessly shattered.

Continuing our walk round the cloisters, we enter the church by the south transept. This is a very long, lofty building, severe and simple in style. A high-domed tower marks the crossing of the transepts. The whole is much ruined and defaced. There is a very large alabaster *retablo* of sixteenth-century workmanship behind the

high altar, on which scenes from the Passion are finely carved. This, too, has suffered from the invaders, who seem to have made the church their special prey—incited, as they were, by the thought of the wealth contained within its walls. The royal tombs are hacked and battered; originally they were, of course, ornamented with gold, silver and precious stones, and the priceless wealth was irresistible to the plunderers. The tomb of Don Jaime el Conquistador (James I of Aragon) was removed to the Cathedral of Tarragona, where it was restored and given a place of honour. Many of the broken pieces of sculpture and precious fragments of all kinds have been taken to the Museum of Antiquities at Tarragona, where they may now be seen.

From the south transept a long, wide flight of steps leads up to the novices' dormitory (*el dormitorio de novicios*), which extends right over the *Sala Capitular* the *Biblioteca*, and the *Archivo*. This immense room, to which there is another staircase from the cloisters, contains thirty-five windows on its western side. By the pattern of the tiles on the floor we judged that the cells opened off on either side of a wide central passage-way. A cell, however, sounds too severe a word to use in connexion with the fair-sized room which was evidently allotted to each novice. At the south end of the dormitory were two or three much larger rooms, and from the three southern windows beautiful views were obtained of the country-side. At the northern end of this huge room a much-ruined staircase led up to a large, low chamber beneath the roof, perhaps the sleeping quarters of some of the servants. The *lavabo*, which projects into the cloisters from their southern side, is a small hexagonal building, roofed over, and contains the fountain—a large, circular stone basin surmounted by a smaller one. From the refectory one looks direct into the *lavabo*, and when the fountain was

playing the effect must have been charming for those sitting at table.

It was delightful lingering in the cloisters, where the stone seats beneath the arched openings seemed to invite repose; the garden in the centre (the *patio*) was well planted with shrubs and flowers, and a delicious scent of roses filled the air. It would take too long to recount all our peregrinations amongst the ruins; suffice it to say that we received an impression of beauty and destruction mingled, of power and helplessness, of great wealth and prosperity combined with tragic desolation. Through the long years, while the monastery was amassing riches and lands, was there not an outside force which was slowly but surely gaining ground against it—waiting its opportunity to strike the deadly blow which was to make its enemy impotent for ever?

We returned to the church once more to have a final glance before leaving. We entered by the west end this time and stopped to notice the tomb of that unhappy Englishman, Philip Duke of Wharton, who died here in 1731 after being nursed and cared for by the monks. It was now afternoon, and the exuberant holiday-makers had all departed; an air of silence and seclusion hung over the lofty building. As we wandered up the church a swallow flew in through the shattered tracery of the east-end window, and we watched its flight down the full length of the nave. High up on the left by the dormitory, the smashed clock, with its white and haggard face, peeped down fearfully on the desecrated tombs beneath. Desolation and destruction everywhere! The sense of stillness was accentuated by the sound of the swallows overhead. Listen! Was that not the sound of hammers and pickaxes hard at work upon the stones?

CHAPTER XVI

SANTAS CREUS

THOSE who have seen the beauties of Poblet will not rest satisfied until they have visited that other interesting Catalonian convent, Santas Creus. As has already been said, this is rather difficult of access from Tarragona, being nine or ten miles distant from the nearest railway station—that of Valls, on the Barcelona–Lérida line. We cut the Gordian knot by hiring a motor-car and making the visit into a pleasant afternoon excursion—this, indeed, seemed the only solution of the question. We had a luxurious car and an intelligent driver, the same one who had taken us to the Tomb of the Scipios a few days before. The road, almost the whole way to Santas Creus, was in an appalling state of hills and hollows, but fortunately the auto was well padded and upholstered, so that when we were hurled from one side of the vehicle to the other we only fell against soft cushions.

We left Tarragona by the inland road that leads past the Devil's Bridge, a road that goes for miles and miles through plantations of nut-trees. These were the Barcelona nuts, our driver told us; they are exported in large quantities to England, more especially at Christmas-time.

It was a beautiful drive—apart from the surface of the road—through varied scenery. In the background there was always a long line of hills sharply defined against the skyline; these sometimes showed blue in the distance, or

purple when the shadow of storm-clouds fell upon them. The foreground was richly cultivated, and there were vines, nut-trees, carobs, or olives in endless succession.

Before we reached Santas Creus we had a charming peep into the village, which was obtained in rather a curious way. We were now in the valley of the Gaya, and below us was a small stream in a deep gorge. The convent was both near to us and far away—near because we were opposite to it, though separated by the ravine, far away because we had yet some distance to go before we could reach the one bridge which leads across the stream. At one particular point we caught a glimpse right inside the village, which was a picture in itself. It must be explained that Santas Creus is approached through the archway of an old house—hamlet, church, and convent buildings all being centred round an open square. Through this arched opening we were now looking, and beyond it we could see a sunlit space, a fountain in the middle, and the figure of an old woman filling her pitcher at the well. The ravine across which we were gazing was in shadow, so was the archway; but the bright afternoon sunshine fell on the patch of village square, the fountain, and the bending figure—truly a delightful scene.

Shortly afterwards we crossed the bridge and went up the steep, narrow road which leads to the village; when we reached the top of the hill our driver turned sharp to the left and took us through the archway into the sunlit square. Here was a little old-world hamlet, with the fountain of San Bernardo in the centre, acacia-trees round about, and quaint-looking houses which formed three sides of the *plaza*. Many of the houses were entered through an arched opening which led into a courtyard; in one corner of this a handsome stone staircase led up to rooms above. The fourth side of the square, that opposite the archway by which we entered, was occupied

by the church, and the long wall of the convent with its entrance at the right-hand end.

The Cistercian convent of Santas Creus was founded by Ramon Berenguer IV in 1157—that is, some eight years after this famous count had founded Poblet. These two twelfth-century monasteries rival each other in their respective claim to be the best example of Catalonian art. Two important events took place in Ramon Berenguer's life in 1149. In this year he founded Poblet, and he married Petronila, daughter of King Ramiro II. By his marriage Catalonia and Aragon became united. Riches flowed into the convent of Santas Creus, and it came to be the burial-place of Catalonian nobles and other wealthy people.

La Orden del Císter, as the Spanish call it, took its name from Cîteaux, the abbey near Dijon where, about the beginning of the twelfth century, this order of Reformed Benedictines arose. Various abuses had crept into monastic life, and the Cistercians, in protest, laid special stress on the virtues of poverty and austerity. It may be said that "Princely Poblet" does not show much evidence of poverty—except in its later days—though its early architecture is severe and simple in style. The Church of Santas Creus, however, is a stern, massive building, resembling a fortress and with little or no ornamentation. "Austerity" is here in every line.

We rang the convent bell, and were admitted into the entrance vestibule. From here we went straight into the *Claustro*. These lovely cloisters, which were built in 1303–41, have not suffered so much as one might expect from the hands of the spoilers, though in some cases the delicate tracery of the arcading is entirely gone. Here we found much to see and admire; first we entered the beautiful little *Templete*, or Temple, as the caretaker was anxious for us to see the marble fountain which it contains.

The *Templete* is a small hexagonal structure which projects into the *patio* (cloister garth) in the same way as the *lavabo* at Poblet. In Cistercian monasteries it was very usual to have a little building of this kind opening off the cloisters where the monks could wash their hands before meals. The Romanesque arches are supported on slender double columns, and above each double column a round or diamond opening is pierced. The roof of the Temple is undamaged, or perhaps renewed, and it protects the lovely fountain beneath. This has a stone foundation, but the two circular basins, one on top of the other, are carved out of a solid block of marble. The spring water which bubbles up through the centre is absolutely pure and cold ; the rims and crevices of both the smaller and the larger basin are fringed with maidenhair fern, the reflexions of which seem to be repeated a hundred times in this lovely mirror. The whole effect was one of exquisite freshness and transparency ; no rays of the sun could ever penetrate this " deep well of light ". The caretaker said the water was " *muy buen para beber* ", and asked if we would like to try it. She went away to fetch glasses, and when we had drunk of it we were convinced we had never before tasted any so ice-cold and deliciously pure.

The cloister garth is filled with lovely fresh foliage of all kinds ; there are small palms and evergreen shrubs, and in one corner a large orange-tree laden with golden fruit. Some stray white orange blossoms on the branches filled the air with their scent. The feature of the cloisters is the wealth of tombs which they contain, mostly of the thirteenth century. One entire side is given up to those of Catalonian nobles, each one built into its own rounded niche. Some of the tombs are very beautiful, in particular the one of the Family Moncada, with its squat twisted columns on the lower portion and its lovely scroll-work on the upper. Two members of this illustrious family,

Ramon and Guillermo, fell at the capture of Majorca in the year 1229.

Leaving the cloisters, we passed into the *Palacio de Don Pedro III de Aragón*. This charming little palace is built round a square courtyard, with an immensely deep well in the centre. The sides of this are fringed with masses of maidenhair fern, and gazing down into the depths we saw our own reflexions in the water far below. A fine staircase in the right-hand corner of the *patio* leads to the apartments above, which open off a wide gallery running round two sides of the square.

When we had descended the stairway again we were shown the prisons and dungeons, now lighted with electric light, of course! We returned to the principal cloister and ascended the steep staircase which leads up to the Novices' Dormitory (*El Dormitorio de Novicios*). The stairs come up through the floor near the centre of the room, rather an odd arrangement one would think. The dormitory is similar to that of the Novices at Poblet, although not nearly so large nor so lofty.

Before leaving the cloisters we stopped to admire the quaint carved capitals which adorn the columns; these consist of animals, or human heads, or fabulous monsters treated in a humorous way. The effect, however, is rather too much of something "stuck on", and the delicate interlacing work of the Poblet capitals gives infinitely more pleasure. On the whole, the Santas Creus cloisters are not quite so satisfying as those of Poblet—that was the impression we received, at all events.

The other monastic rooms and the *claustro antiguo* we could not do more than glance at, as we were anxious to return to Tarragona before dark and we still had the church to visit. Presumably the door leading from the cloister to this is now blocked up, for we had to leave the convent by the *puerta real*—the principal entrance—and walk by

the path near the outside wall to reach it. We found it to be a fortress-like building, as has been said, and both very lofty and very long. The chief point of interest in it is the tomb of Don Pedro III of Aragon, who died in 1285. This is in the transept, and near by is the tomb of Don Jaime II and his wife Blanca de Anjou, *Reyes de Aragon*. Jaime II died in 1327, and, although his tomb is here, his body is at Palma.

Alas, for the beauty and wealth of these interesting old monasteries! Santas Creus suffered the same fate as her twin sister Poblet. In 1835, or thereabouts, when popular feeling against the monks ran high, Santas Creus was stormed by the mob and practically destroyed. A mere wreck of her former self, she still stands solidly above the valley and attracts us by the pathetic desolation of her ruins.

We were loth to hurry away from Santas Creus, to whose beauties we had paid scant homage, but we felt that in view of the long drive home we must not linger. As we left the hamlet and prepared to descend the hill leading to the bridge our driver stopped the car and said he wanted us to see a spring which was hidden amongst the trees lower down the ravine. He left the car at the road-side and took us down a woodland path, which presently led to a tiny circular dell with a clear, bubbling pool of spring water in the centre; a rivulet ran out from this at one end and trickled down the hill-side to join the stream in the gorge below. This "silent dell" was hemmed in by trees on all sides, the air was moist and "bosky", and the whole atmosphere amazingly English. Perhaps it was for this reason that our driver wanted us to see it; he seemed immensely proud of this un-Spanish scene and anxious that we should share his enthusiasm. For our part it was only curious as being a morsel of Spain which was quite unlike anything we had seen before. Perhaps

if one spends all one's life in a dry and dusty land—though this description does not apply so much to Catalonia as to other provinces—a "spot of greenery" of this kind means more than we can realize; or was it that the little oasis appealed to some deep-seated emotion in the Spaniard's mind which might be traced back to the yearnings of a remote Arabian ancestor, a desert-dweller, whose very life depended on the finding of just such "living fountains of water"?

CHAPTER XVII

IN A MOTOR DILIGENCE

"*TOUT casse, tout lasse, tout passe.*" The last day of our trip had come and we were genuinely sorry to leave Tarragona and to bid *adios* to Espagna. In making arrangements for our departure we found it was a case of the oft-told tale—trains rather few and far between. We were due to cross the frontier that evening, as we intended spending the night at Perpignan. It meant very early rising at Tarragona if we were to be at Barcelona in time for the frontier train, so we yielded to the landlord's persuasions, abandoned the idea of getting up at an uncomfortable time, and decided, instead, to travel by motor diligence. This would take us to Vendrell, where, after a short wait, we could pick up a local train which would carry us on to Barcelona. The diligence left at a reasonable hour, so fortunately there was no question of setting off on our journey breakfastless—a disheartening way of beginning the day, no matter with what heroism one faces it.

It may be remarked here that a journey by motor diligence is an enjoyable way of travelling despite the fact that there are certain hardships connected with it. Some of us are familiar with the descriptions given by Augustus Hare, Théophile Gautier, and other writers, of the horrors of the old Spanish mule diligence. The witty Frenchman, in particular, delights in depicting his sufferings in these

antiquated vehicles, and brings vividly before the reader the discomforts of travel in the early nineteenth century.

In those days the diligence was drawn by a long file of mules, and road-side upsets were of frequent occurrence. Gautier describes in detail *el correo real* (the royal mail) in which he and his friend left Burgos. Of the mules which drew it he says: "I have never seen mules which were angrier, more restive, and more savage. At each stop it took an army of *muchachos* to attach one to the carriage. These diabolic beasts used to come out of the stable standing on their hind-legs, and it was only by means of a bunch of postilions hanging on to their collar that one could succeed in reducing them to the state of quadruped. I believe that what inspired them with this devilish activity was the thought of the food which was awaiting them at the next *venta*, for they were of a 'frightful thinness'".

The inevitable accident happened, and Gautier suddenly saw his friend pitched headlong on top of him. "Are you dead?" asked the friend. "On the contrary," I replied. "And you?" "Very little," he returned. And then they both climbed out of the shattered roof. The carriage was broken into a thousand pieces.

Happenings such as these were mercifully spared us, and our hardships were not of such a hectic nature; but our vehicle could not be called luxurious, and we were packed in very much like "peas in a pod", as were the passengers in the old-world mule diligence.

After a long wait the *automovil* was at length ready to start. The last late-comer was squeezed inside, and the final batch of packages thundered down on the roof. We rattled out of Tarragona and started off Vendrell-wards, with the blue sea on our right.

Soon we had passed on our left the Tomb of the Scipios,

and later on we went through the *Arco de Barra*, a fine triumphal arch dating from Roman times. Long before this, however, the conversation had begun, and a steady flow was kept up all the way to Vendrell. A Swiss wine merchant was sitting opposite us, and, asking our nationality, he quickly launched forth on a sea of talk. He explained that he had lived for thirty years in Spain, and that during that time he had become somewhat deaf. He naïvely remarked: "I can still hear Spaniards when they talk, but I can no longer hear English people"! Apparently he saw nothing incongruous in the distinction, but we, who had suffered so much from the loud Spanish voice, chuckled inwardly. Henceforth the conversation chiefly took place in writing, as the rattle of the vehicle and the roar of many tongues made the spoken word a matter of difficulty to the Swiss merchant. He produced pencil and paper from his pocket, and written phrases were alternated with stray remarks shouted at intervals. "It is four years since I learn English. I have splendid teacher, a French lady who live two year in Glasgow." Then a long pause while he thought out the next exercise phrase. "In Tarragona there are many Roman remainings"!—This as we passed the *Arco de Barra*.

Far be it from us to criticize his English, knowing that our own Spanish was much worse. Yet we were always listened to politely, and our auditors would allow no trace of suffering to come into their faces. But then the Spanish people have been famed for their powers of patient endurance ever since the days of the Inquisition.

As we were noticing the carefully kept vineyards which stretched away from either side of the road—"That make wine very special", was the sentence that was boomed at us. We wondered if it was from this stock that the famous Chartreuse liqueur was made. When the French expelled the monks from the Grande Chartreuse in 1903 they fled

to Spain and settled at Tarragona, where they re-commenced making the liqueur for which their name is noted.

We were going through well-cultivated land, and as far as the eye could see there were vines, olives, almonds, and other food-bearing trees, and yet they were not in any way enclosed by fences. Perhaps respect for vegetation is early instilled into Spanish children. We thought of the notice we had seen stuck up in a wood near Tarragona :

"*No destruyas lo que desde la cuna á sepulcro nos acompaña incessamente.*"

("Do not destroy that which from the cradle to the grave accompanies us incessantly.")

Presently a slight flutter amongst the passengers made itself felt, and all eyes were directed towards a young couple sitting on our left. Soon after leaving Tarragona our Swiss friend, for our information, had written on a piece of paper an Ollendorf sentence relating to these young people. "They are married at seven o'clock this morning." She was a pretty little bride, very demure, and the youthful husband seemed full of solicitude for her.

The remark now being passed from mouth to mouth was, "They have forgotten their wedding-rings!" A few unkind titters were heard at the back of the vehicle as every passenger eagerly informed his neighbour of the tragic state of affairs. Meanwhile the poor young bridegroom, every moment growing paler and paler, was searching feverishly in all his pockets, one after another. Alas! all of no avail—rings they had none. There was nothing for it but to face the fact bravely, and allow the amusement round about to die a natural death, as other incidents in the journey cropped up to distract the thoughts of this little world of travellers.

But when the diligence drew up at Vendrell the bridegroom made haste to have a long whispered conversation with the driver, giving him some detailed instructions.

How would they succeed in procuring the forgotten rings? The two young people followed us in to the railway station and, like us, took tickets for Barcelona. Without doubt, as a good Catalonian couple, they were going to spend a brief honeymoon at the convent of Montserrat. Would the priests admit them if they had no wedding-rings? And could La Santa Virgen bless a union which had begun so ill? *Quién sabe?* Doubtless some way out of the difficulty would be found. As bride and bridegroom crept up the winding stairway behind the altar, would not Maria Purissima, in her agelong shrine, when she had received their kiss, extend her protection to these frail children of dust setting forth on their long journey through life?

CHAPTER XVIII

IRUN

IRUN, the first Spanish town which the traveller enters on crossing the frontier, is situated on the Bidassoa, and is in the smallest of the three Basque provinces, that of Guípúzcoa. Those who wish to rest after the long journey from England may with advantage spend a day or two here and enjoy all the lovely views of coast and hills which the district affords. Here the novice may be broken in gently, as it were, to Spanish ways. The town is quiet, lunch, if not dinner, is served at a reasonable hour, and one sees notices stuck up in the shops, "*Ici on parle français*". Let no one count too much on the amount of French spoken, however, as this soon gives out, although we are only a few minutes distant from the frontier.

Perhaps the first thing which most people will want to see is the division between Spain and France. If we walk down the wide road to which the arrow points, "*A Francia*", we soon reach the bridge which leads across the Bidassoa. Here we pass the Spanish *aduana*, and at the right-hand side of the road a man steps forward from his little house and asks to see our passports, while at the left-hand side we have to buy a five-centimo ticket to enable us to cross the frontier. The centre of the bridge marks the division of the two countries. A stream of traffic passes to and fro, pedestrians for the most part, and evidently all local people, as few stop to lean on the bridge, as we did, to

admire the unfamiliar scene. Looking upstream, we saw the little Ile de la Conférence, or Pheasants' Island as it is sometimes called. This flat piece of neutral ground has been the meeting-place of kings or their representatives throughout the centuries. Here royal standards have fluttered in the breeze, regal marriages have been arranged, or noble prisoners exchanged.

Perhaps the most notable event was the signing of the Treaty of the Pyrenees, which took place in the year 1659. It was this famous treaty which caused the small piece of ground to be known as the Ile de la Conférence ; in addition, the treaty gave rise to the expression attributed to Louis XIV, "*Il n'y a plus de Pyrénées*", a phrase which passed into the French language and came to mean that all barriers were broken down between families or States, all difficulties removed. At the conference it was arranged that Louis XIV should marry the Infanta Maria Teresa, daughter of Philip IV of Spain, and that warfare between the two countries should cease. The marriage took place the following year, when the island again witnessed great affairs of State. The union was solemnized at St. Jean de Luz, a French town a few miles distant, but the Spanish monarch had his quarters on Pheasants' Island, which thus once more saw the pomp and panoply of kings. The court painter Velasquez accompanied Philip on his important journey north, and played a prominent part in all the splendid ceremonies. Whether as a result of the fatigues connected with the long journey or not, Velasquez fell a victim to malaria after his return to Madrid, and at the end of a week's illness he died, the world thus losing one of its greatest painters.

As we looked upstream the hills of the Basses-Pyrénées formed the background of the picture. These dominate the landscape and were to prove our constant companions, whether we travelled southwards to San Sebastián or

northwards to Biarritz. One never gets away from mountains in this district, and it came to be a daily joy to watch the sun sinking in a transparent sky behind some lofty range or peak, for the lower slopes of the Cantabrians stretch down to the coast-line here.

Having crossed the bridge and passed the French *douaniers* at its farther end, we arrived in Hendaye, a town beloved by Pierre Loti, who spent some years of his life here, immortalizing the district in his tale, *Ramuntcho*. An electric tram leads down to Hendaye-Plage, and from this point we had a delightful view of Fuenterrabía, situated on the Spanish side of the Bidassoa. The little old village with its quaint houses stands on a promontory above the estuary, and looks extremely picturesque in the afternoon light of a winter's day.

Of the two pictures of the river mouth—that is, Fuenterrabía seen from Hendaye, and Hendaye seen from Fuenterrabía—the former is, perhaps, the more attractive, although we had a beautiful view one day from the Spanish side, as we looked across to Hendaye-Plage. We were in Fuenterrabía-Marina, the farthest point which the tramway from Irun reaches, and it was late afternoon. The sun was sinking, and we lingered on the esplanade to watch the lovely light in which the sky and shore were bathed. All the colours were intensified in the sunset glow; the sea was deep blue, the sands were golden, and dark purple shadows fell in patches across the sand-banks. On the other side of the river, in which gaily painted boats were anchored, lay Hendaye-Plage, its shore and houses reflected in the clear transparent water. It was mid-winter, yet the air was so soft and mild that it might have been spring or summer. Coming from dull grey skies and piercing cold as we had done, we felt a thrill of pleasure as we looked on the southern scene.

Fuenterrabía and Fuenterrabía-Marina, though the two

are almost one, as are Hendaye and Hendaye-Plage on the opposite side, are quaint, picturesque villages and well worth a visit. In both, the houses are of as many colours as Joseph's coat. The outside of one's dwelling must be painted, that is the first essential, and if it is of a different tint from that of one's neighbour, so much the better. No dull uniformity here, no dreary sameness, every domicile must have an individuality—which is expressed by the colour of its walls. A buff house has its woodwork painted green; near it is a chocolate-coloured one, or a grey or a blue, no hue of the rainbow being despised. All the houses have huge projecting eaves; not only that, but each upper story overhangs the lower, and this in a town where there are frequently three stories to every building. Indeed, as we walked up one of the principal streets in Fuenterrabía we had the feeling that a violent rainstorm would have no terrors here, as pedestrians could walk under shelter all the way. True, there is a narrow space in the centre where one is unprotected, but except for this—probably an important exception when rivers of water begin to collect and fall from the sloping roofs—one can be under cover all the way.

Every house has its balconies, tier on tier, and its great beams of wood; all have charm and a quaint old-worldness of their own. Some look feeble and tottering and have to be supported, as it were, by neighbours more robust.

Fuenterrabía is not merely ornamental, however; it is an ancient walled town, and has played its part in history. Much of the walls still remains, and their strength and thickness prove that the taking of this frontier-fortress can have been no easy task. But for whatever historical events it has formed a background, it was not here that Roland met his fate, in spite of Milton's lines,

> When Charlemaine with all his peerage fell
> By Fontarabbia,

though without doubt it seems a fitting spot for just such a dramatic incident.

The Palace of Charles V, sometimes called the Castle, or the *Casa Solar*, occupies the highest ground, and, although in a sadly ruined and neglected state, is still an imposing building. In spite of its name, much of the massive structure dates from the twelfth century, and possibly the Emperor never paid more than fleeting visits here.

From the roof to which we climbed there is an extensive view over river, land, and sea. Headlands, French and Spanish, jut out into the sea, while landwards the horizon is encircled by the foothills and spurs of the Pyrenees. The Bidassoa, that somewhat insignificant-looking stream which runs just beneath the castle, nearly proved a stumbling-block to Wellington in the Peninsular War. The Hendaye side of the river was tenaciously held by the French, who had just been driven out of Spain, and, as all the bridges were broken down and the fords guarded, the Duke, advancing from the south with his large army, was at a loss to know how to proceed farther. Some Basque fishermen, however, told him that nearly opposite Fuenterrabía a ford existed which could be made use of for a few hours at certain low tides. Wellington turned the information to good account, and one morning early the French general, feeling himself secure, was astonished to see the whole British force before him. This was the beginning of further successes, the Duke advancing up the river and capturing the heights as he went.

Having admired the lovely view with its wide expanse of land and river, we descended the stairway and turned our steps towards the church, which is only a stone's throw distant. This, to our disappointment, we found closed, and we were told it was only open at certain hours in the afternoon and early evening.

We were fortunate enough to have a charming picture

of Fuenterrabía just as we were leaving it. We were in the tramcar outside its walls—for tramways have not penetrated its precincts—and as we took one last look at the old entrance gateway a Basque fisherman appeared from near at hand and passed through into the street beyond. He was clad in loose blue overalls, had bare feet and legs, and was carrying a large, flat, empty basket in one hand, while on his head he balanced a bundle. As he disappeared through the archway which made such an appropriate setting, he seemed to be a part of the general quaintness of this little mediæval town.

The tramway between Fuenterrabía and Irun goes through the flat land lying near the river-bed. Much maize is grown here, and the tall withered stalks, tip-tilted, were still standing, forming miniature forests everywhere. Cabbages were flourishing beneath the stems, or turnips, or fresh green grass, the latter quite a novelty for us in Spain. Balconied houses fringe the roadway; these are always gay with colour, and as though the occupiers wished to add one more touch, from time to time one would see big bunches of scarlet capsicums hung beneath the overhanging eaves. Perhaps the glowing red helped to compensate for the lack of flowers, for a Spaniard must decorate his abode, and in default of a row of potted carnations on the roof he must needs be content with something less romantic.

The tramway itself is not without interest. The conductor wears a loose blue blouse, and suspended from a cord round his neck hangs a polished horn on which he blows a melodious "toot" every time the car moves on. The tram is in three detachable portions—one can travel in a closed vehicle or an open one according to taste, while packages or merchandise can be conveyed in the van attached. Much carting of goods goes on between Irun and Fuenterrabía, and many bundles and baskets

were dumped by the country-folk inside the van. The busiest time for this was the morning, and later in the day the van would be removed. Most of the people had a seafaring look—not that this was surprising in view of the extent of the fishing industry at Fuenterrabía.

In spite of it being mid-winter practically all the women and girls went about without hats, their masses of lovely black hair being apparently sufficient protection against wind and weather ; while the *boínas*, the headgear of the men, were reduced to the smallest possible dimensions. These tiny, dark blue caps were everywhere in evidence, and were worn by old men and boys alike. The children of both sexes at Irun and in San Sebastián have a pretty custom of wearing scarlet-topped *alpargatas*, and very delightful the little red-shod feet look as they scamper about the streets.

There were children in plenty to admire the entrancing Nativity scenes which filled the shop windows here, though perhaps no child found them quite as enthralling as we did. Episodes from everyday life were portrayed as well as Bethlehem scenes, and all were a novelty to us, utterly foreign as they were. One large shop window was transformed into a desert, sawdust being spread to simulate sand. The stable, a wooden shed covered with foliage, was in the centre, and in it lay the Babe, surrounded by Mary, Joseph, and the oxen and asses. A procession of Magi and other worshippers approached the shed, the desert being dotted with figures, mules, and camels. The animals were all laden with precious gifts, or with sacks of corn, bread, or fruit.

Many other scenes besides the Nativity were represented —some Biblical, others incidents in everyday life—but the desert and a long line of camels always figured largely. One little group of figures was apparently very popular. This was Mary and Joseph being turned away from the

inn, a small two-story house, painted green, with red shutters and yellow roof. Out of the dormer window the innkeeper, clad in his nightshirt, sticks a red nightcapped head, refusing admittance to the belated couple. *La Virgen*, robed in the traditional blue and red, looks passive under the blow, but Joseph, with hands spread out in indignation, seems thoroughly annoyed.

Amongst the everyday scenes a stream of water with a bridge over and a man fishing therefrom (always attended by his dog) was a favourite subject. Near the stream there would be a mill, from which a donkey was carrying away sacks of corn. If a man was fishing, near at hand there was always a woman bending over the water, washing clothes. Other domestic incidents were that of a woman baking little cakes, or cooking eggs on an open-air stove, or a farmer's wife collecting eggs in a basket. Eggs and fowls were much represented, and often a basket of eggs was shown as knocked over by a cat or dog, and fury was depicted on the figure of the man or woman in charge. Bunches of purple grapes had their part, too, in these groups, bread, eggs, and grapes being much in evidence. Flocks of sheep led by a shepherd or shepherdess were popular, and cows and mules were frequently displayed. These toys were all made in a kind of composition and gaily painted; they fascinated us by their novelty, and we pondered much on their significance.

There were other Christmas presents in the shops which were equally interesting. These were the *Anguilas*, or eels, with which the confectioners' windows were filled. They were of all sizes, but their form and design were the same in every case. Each one was circular and fitted exactly into a round cardboard box. The eel is something between a cake and a sweetmeat, the outer crust being a kind of pastry, while inside is almond paste similar to that of *turrón*. The smaller fry were not so impressive

as their big brothers, but some of the larger ones were quite magnificent, with swishing tail and sparkling eye. A beautiful colour-effect was given by the mingling of different crystallized fruits, dark green or rich orange representing the ocean deep—the splendid creature thus swimming about, as it were, in a riot of orange and citron peel, which was closely packed about his twisting body. Curls of white icing sugar suggested the crest of the waves above the depths. The confectioners' shops were also filled with *turrones*, or large cakes of a kind of nougat or almond paste, a very delicious sweetmeat.

Save for the Nativity scenes and the cakes, however, there was little sign of Christmas, which apparently is not made much of here. In the church which we visited, there was nothing special to the time of year, though a day or two later, at San Sebastián, the churches were displaying *el niño Jesús* in the Manger.

Irun's Renaissance church, *Nuestra Señora del Juncal* (*Juncal* means a ground full of rushes), a massively built structure containing no *coro*, is not a particularly interesting building, and did not detain us long. During our survey of it we were rather astonished to see a young girl enter wearing no covering of any kind on her head. We had remarked this once before in a church near the French side of the frontier, so concluded it was a custom permitted in Basque-land. Woe betide the woman who tried to adopt it in other parts of Spain!

Daily life in Irun starts at a comparatively early hour —rather too early we thought it when we were awakened in the morning by the passing of the dust-cart in the street below. No ugly corporation motor-vehicle this, but an *antiguo* bullock-wagon, with solid wooden wheels, drawn by two mild-eyed oxen who looked as though only half-awake, their heads swathed in heavy sheep-skins. A Basque in blue blouse carrying a long thin pole walked

in front of this patriarchal pair, and at intervals rang a resounding bell. Critics have complained of Sir Walter Scott for making "a blast of that dread horn" at Roncesvalles heard at Fuenterrabía, a place nearly forty miles distant, but had they listened to that booming ox-wagon bell at an early hour in the morning they would, perhaps, not have been so ready to accuse the poet of exaggeration. In this connexion, too, we must remember the powerful organ of the Lady Dulcinea del Toboso: "Oh, what a pair of lungs and a voice she has! I remember she got out one day upon the bell-tower of the church to call some young ploughmen, who were in a field of her father's, and, though they were half a league off, they heard her as plainly as if they had stood at the foot of the tower". The next sound to awaken sluggards was the postman's knock, his vigorous rat-a-tat-tat on the heavy door-knockers, as he went from house to house, rivalling the horn of Roland in its intensity.

The inhabitants of Irun are now all thoroughly awakened, busy housewives are shaking brightly coloured mats over the balconies, bird-cages are being hung out in the open air, the tramcar has begun to run, and daily life is in full swing once more. Circumstances necessitated our making a longer stay at Irun than we had originally intended, but we did not regret our sojourn in the small town. The comfortable hotel (*el Palacio*), where we received every attention from the ladies in charge, contributed not a little to our contentment; and though anxious to push on to our next stopping-place, we were genuinely sorry to leave Irun. *Las patronas* came out on the steps of the veranda to bid us *adios*, and with cordial handshakings and many farewells, "*Buen viaje, buen salud*", we finally drove off to the railway station.

CHAPTER XIX

BURGOS

A CITY of contradictions, as we shall see! "*Hace frío en Burgos, hace seco. Muy frío, muy seco.*" So we were told many times before our visit. Knowing the town was in the midst of a desolate plain, nearly 3,000 feet above sea level, and realizing that we were going to it at the wrong time of year—mid-winter—we pictured beforehand its cold, dry climate, and saw it wrapped in a mantle of snow, a bitter wind blowing from across the plain, but bright sunshine over all. And the reality? We arrived in drizzling rain, the sky was grey and overcast, and so enervating was it that we would have welcomed a touch of bracing cold. In short, it was the typical English weather of a damp November day. This continued during our visit; the skies never cleared, the rain hardly ceased. "*Muy seco*" evidently, we said to each other. As for the *frío*, we found walking a burden, so heavy was the atmosphere, so mild the air.

An antiquated omnibus received us into its depths at the station, and drove us to our hotel. This vehicle was so old and stricken in years, so much in need of a wash and brush-up, that we almost feared to enter. It must have seen yeoman service in its day, so full of honourable wounds it was. We could not help thinking the time had almost come when it might be suitably pensioned off, or placed in a museum, an interesting relic of a former age.

As we drove through the streets we noticed a large placard, "Begging and blasphemy are forbidden in this city." If one could judge from the condition of the omnibus, the citizens of Burgos were not in a very affluent state, so it was to their credit that no begging was allowed.

As soon as possible after our arrival we went to visit the famous cathedral. We had hardly begun to look up at the west front before a crowd of small boys, calling out to each other, "*Son muy ricas*", rushed at us, surrounded us, and nearly deafened us with their reiterated cries of "*Un perrito, un perrito*" ("little dog", or sou). Judging it impossible to stand and look at anything while this hubbub was going on, we went round to the north doorway, thinking to escape our small persecutors. But a faithful few, a loyal trio, followed, and during our peregrinations in the great pile they never left us, calling upon us the while to have compassion on their cut fingers (wrapped in scraps of cloth), on their hunger, and their sufferings generally. Their demands for *un perrito* turned to whines, to lamentations, to a long-drawn drone. Certainly *mendicidad* was forbidden in the city, and it was not difficult to realize that the second prohibition was a corollary to the violation of the first. We intimated to a sacristan who was passing that we found the attentions of the *golfos*, as he called them, rather wearing, but he replied they were only little ones and would do us no harm, and with these consoling words he left us, jangling his great keys as he hurried down the aisle. Dark was now coming on, and we had to abandon a closer inspection of the building till the following day.

This time we approached it by the north doorway, *La Puerta del Sarmental*—thus escaping small tormentors, and stopped to admire its fine sculptured figures before entering. It may be mentioned here that a picturesque view of this door is obtained from the *Paseo del Espalon*

Viejo (the promenade near the river). One looks up a narrow street and sees the flight of steps leading up to the cathedral with the carved doorway at the top.

The cathedral, it must be confessed, is disappointing; it was constructed at too many different dates, and the various styles are too mixed to permit of a harmonious whole. This is not to say, however, that there is not much beauty to be found in it. The side aisles, for instance, of early work, are simple and grand in design, and one can linger here and enjoy a brief respite from the painfully over-decorated portions of the fabric. The huge *coro*, with its Corinthian columns, blocks the nave, and seems more of an excrescence here than it usually does in a Spanish church. One forgives its dimensions, however, when one enters it, for here are the most delightful of carved choir-stalls. The seats are in two rows, and both Biblical and Pagan subjects are represented, an incongruous mixture that is not without its piquancy. In the centre of the *coro* lies the beautiful effigy of Bishop Maurice, considered to be of thirteenth-century work. It is made of wood covered with bronze and decorated with enamels. The famous Maurice, the founder of the church, became Bishop of Burgos in 1213, and in 1221 he laid the first stone of the new cathedral. The tradition is that he was an Englishman, but there seems to be no definite proof of this statement.

Beyond the *coro* is the sixteenth-century octagon, or central lantern, florid in style, and overladen with unnecessary ornament. With its four ponderous piers and its riot of uninteresting detail this part of the building has no beauty in itself, and is quite out of keeping with some of the earlier work. At the extreme east end of the cathedral is the *Capilla del Condestable*—a large fifteenth-century chapel which contains the tombs of the Constable of Castile and his wife. The two effigies, lying side by side,

which cover the tomb, are in marble, and this piece of fifteenth-century work is carved with extraordinary delicacy.

The many side-chapels contain various art treasures, which in some cases are of great interest, notably a beautiful picture by the sixteenth-century Italian artist, Sebastiano del Piombo. There are some fine tombs, too, and a *retablo* of painted wood depicting Christ's genealogical tree is curious. In the *Capilla del Corpus Christi* we were shown the famous Coffer of the Cid. It is placed high up on the wall, much above one's head, and looks an insignificant chest to have so many stirring tales told of it. The remains of the Cid—after many wanderings—now lie at the crossing of the transepts, and a simple tablet marks the spot. The most attractive part of the cloisters is the doorway which leads into them. This is in the south transept, near the *Puerta del Sarmental.* The massive wooden door has for its subject Christ's Entry into Jerusalem, and the carving is executed with great force and vigour. Above and around the doorway are many quaint figures in sculpture.

In spite of all the historical interest connected with Burgos Cathedral, and in spite of the art treasures which its walls contain, it must be admitted that it does not satisfy, and one feels none of the thrill which far simpler and plainer churches arouse. It lacks the restraint and dignity which one associates with early Gothic, and its surfeit of poor ornamentation—its richness—merely inspires fatigue. Perhaps the dwellers of this city in a dreary plain were struggling to find relief from its desolation, were striving to create a beauty which Nature had denied them in their surroundings. In a vain endeavour to escape the monotony around them they over-built, over-decorated, over-elaborated a mighty fabric, hoping perhaps that its wealth would compensate for the poverty of the country-side.

The previous evening the landlord had approached us on the subject of our next day's doings. He could procure us, he said, a most beautiful carriage, drawn by two splendid horses, which we could have for as many hours as we liked, the price being just the same. The driver would be a most intelligent man, who could explain everything to us—*todo, todo*—in a delightful way ; in fact, it was to be a fairy coach with a resplendent prince sitting on the box. We made due allowance for Iberian eloquence, and with the station bus in mind we did not anticipate luxurious travel. Nevertheless, it was with a slight shock that we realized that the dilapidated carriage standing at the door was intended for us. It was of the same ancient lineage as the omnibus, and as we bumped over the cobblestones we feared lest the vehicle would disintegrate altogether and precipitate us into the mud. The promise that we could have it for as long as we liked was thus a fairly safe one, as we would hardly be tempted to make a prolonged drive in anything quite so decrepit ! As for the driver, he also was full of years, and so muffled up in his *manta* that had one word passed his lips—which it never did—we could not have heard it.

After seeing the cathedral, therefore, we set forth in this splendid equipage and drove through the town en route for the Monastery of Miraflores. Rain fell steadily ; there seemed to be hardly any daylight. In the streets one would see a priest, holding up his mud-stained *soutane* with both hands, as he sought to cross to the other side. Everyone was splashed with mud, everything looked dismal. The men were all going about wrapped in their *mantas* (often of lovely colours) in spite of the mild weather, while the women went bare-headed and with open-necked dresses.

We left the town and reached the open country ; here the prospect was no brighter, mud lay deep everywhere,

the land looked bleak and barren. Through rain-dimmed windows we peered out at the mournful landscape, finding little of interest for the eye to rest on. After a while we arrived at the *Cartuja de Miraflores*, a Carthusian convent. This monastic house was founded about the year 1441 by Juan II. It occupies the ground where formerly stood the Palace of Enrique III (Juan's father). The original church is not standing, and the present building was completed in the year 1488.

We rang a bell at the entrance to the convent and were admitted to the *patio*, at the farther end of which is a small church without aisles. As we entered two or three monks were praying in the choir-stalls. Clothed in their loose, white, flowing robes, with hoods drawn over their heads, they knelt, absolutely motionless, as immobile as the lovely alabaster figures in the monument close at hand. One monk came forward at our approach, and the others, disturbed in their meditations, moved away. The beautiful tomb of Juan II and his wife, Isabella of Portugal, is the chief object of interest in the building. This noble work was erected by Isabella the Catholic (wife of Ferdinand) in memory of her parents. The sculptor was Gil de Siloe, and he began it in the year 1489 and finished it in 1493. The monument, which is a very large one, is in alabaster and the design is octagonal. The two effigies lie side by side, and round the magnificent base are carved innumerable saints, kings, and other figures. The two principal figures are dignified and impressive, and the carving and design of the whole is very beautiful.

Near this is Gil de Siloe's other masterpiece, the tomb of the Infante Alfonso. It is placed in a recess in the north wall, and consists of a lovely kneeling figure of the prince, while round about are other figures and foliage richly carved. Alfonso died in 1470, when he was sixteen years of age, and through his death his sister, Isabella the Catholic,

became queen. These two tombs claim the visitor's whole attention, but the *retablo* is full of interest too. It is one of those huge altar-pieces so typical of Spanish churches, with an immense number of figures, all realistically carved and painted. This also is by Gil de Siloe, and was erected to the memory of Juan II and Isabella of Portugal, whose kneeling forms are depicted below.

One other work of art must be mentioned. This is the statue of St. Bruno, founder of the Carthusian Order, which is in the chapel of his name. It is a life-like wooden figure, painted, as is the custom in Spain, and is by a Portuguese artist named Pereira. The saint is in the long white robe of his order—in his left hand he holds an open book, and in the other his pastoral staff. The face is full of devotional feeling, and the work is simple and sincere. The monk who acted as our guide was most anxious for us to see and admire everything, and talked in a quiet, enthusiastic way all the time. Frail old man though he was, now and again he suddenly bent down and passionately kissed the altar steps, or (more difficult still) the pavement of the church, prostrating himself, with hands spread out, in an intensity of religious fervour. Then he would resume his serene conversation, hands thrust once more into the wide, loose sleeves of his robe. He seemed to be a part of the peace and tranquillity of this old-world monastic house, set as it is in the midst of a desolate plain.

Before driving back to Burgos we diverged a little in order to visit the *Real Monasterio de las Huelgas*. This also in former times was a royal dwelling, but the religious house is of older foundation than the *Cartuja*. The credit of it goes to an Englishwoman, Eleanor, daughter of Henry II, who became the wife of Alfonso VIII. (She it was who is said to have brought over from England Maurice, the founder and Bishop of Burgos Cathedral.)

Queen Eleanor, so the story goes, persuaded her husband to found this abbey, which was accordingly begun in the year 1180. It was first inhabited in 1187, and in 1199 it was established as a Cistercian house. It became extremely wealthy, and attracted many noble ladies to the seclusion of its walls.

Unfortunately visitors are shown very little of the building, though that little fills them with a desire to see more. The church only is shown, and a very small portion of that, as the bulk of it is screened off for the nuns. It is a large fabric built in the thirteenth century, simple and severe in style both within and without, but full of beauty. There are some sarcophagi with quaint carved figures in the entrance-porch, and in the church are many tombs of illustrious people. Those of Alfonso VIII and Queen Eleanor are in the *coro*, but the public are not admitted to it. In the south transept is a delightful picture—a painted wood-carving—of the Presentation of the Virgin. There are various banners hanging in the church, of which one in the *coro*—into which we may peep through the *reja*—is that wrested from the Moors at the Spanish victory of Las Navas de Tolosa (1212).

The other sights of Burgos are not of any great interest, and the town in itself has little that is picturesque to offer the traveller. The old Gateway of Santa Maria might have been pleasing had not Charles V laid his heavy hand upon it, adorning it with statues of surprising ugliness. Few of the streets can be called quaint or attractive, and the fact that nearly all the houses have glazed-in balconies gives one the impression that the town is all windows. In the hotels high prices are charged, much higher in proportion than in other Spanish towns, and this despite the fact that—speaking from personal experience—the standard of comfort is lower than elsewhere.

Burgos, of course, is the birthplace of the Cid and his

last resting-place, and in judging it one must make due allowance for the glamour and glory which this romantic name casts over the city. The visitor, therefore, must concentrate on the wealth of historical detail connected with *El Campeador* and his exploits, and not look for an outward picturesqueness which Burgos does not attempt to give.

CHAPTER XX

SAN SEBASTIÁN

THERE are many San Sebastiáns, although all have occupied the same site. There is the San Sebastián of the Duke of Wellington's time, though the town has changed much since those days, or the fashionable San Sebastián or the unfashionable. "Everything is *muy triste ahora*" (very sad now), we were told; the great casino is turned into a hospital for soldiers wounded in the Moroccan war, gambling is no more, and the *gente elegante* go elsewhere. So the inhabitants lamented to us. "Yes, General Primo de Rivera is trying to put a stop to gambling; he has closed our casino and the town is suffering in consequence. *Los ricos* go to Biarritz, the rival of San Sebastián, or anywhere else where they can get what they want, and trade, of course, goes with them." In all directions we saw notices stuck up, "This house to let", "Flat to let furnished", and so on, which certainly gave rather a melancholy air to the streets, especially as some of the large shops facing *La Concha* were closed too. Yet we did not find the town as *triste* as its citizens made out, and we thought it an enjoyable place for a short stay.

For one thing the weather was truly delightful, and this greatly helped to create a favourable impression. The marvellous sunsets are something to be remembered with joy for ever after, and blue skies and continuous sunshine at Christmastide are not so common as to be lightly thought

of. As a matter of fact, while we were basking like lizards in the sun, people at home were being dug out of snow-drifts which were piled up before innumerable front-doors. Snow-ploughs were clearing the streets and tramcars had ceased to run. "Is it always fine here?" we asked incredulously. "*Siempre no*", was the reply, "it was very wet before you came". But of cold or frost we heard not a word. Not only did we escape damp, fog, and snow, but short dark days were equally unknown. It was light till nearly five o'clock in the afternoon, and after that the streets were so brilliantly lighted and the air was so soft and mild, that there was no need to hurry indoors. In a climate which was neither too hot nor too cold, we revelled in the fact that we could spend much of our time in mid-winter out of doors. So serene were the skies, so transparent the atmosphere, that one was reminded of nothing so much as the pictures of some of the early Italian painters. (For instance, Perugini's "St. Sebastien" with its luminous background.) During the late afternoon especially, when the sun was sinking, the air was intensely clear, and distant objects, mountains, rocks, or trees were seen as distinctly as though near at hand. A brilliancy seemed to surround everything. Even after dark there was no chilliness in the air, and we woke day after day to cloudless sunshine and blue sea and sky.

San Sebastián has a unique position on the Bay of Biscay. Its bay, *La Concha*, is a perfect semicircle, and might be compared to a crescent moon, the points of which are two rocky promontories. It faces north-east and between the two projecting headlands is a picturesque rocky island, Santa Clara. This is at the entrance, but not quite in the centre, being slightly to the westward. Seen from the north side of the town the island appears to form part of the mainland.

Of the two headlands, that to the west is Monte Igueldo

and that to the north-east Monte Urgull. Monte Igueldo is not a lofty peak, being only some 600 feet high, yet there is a beautiful view from its summit. Monte Urgull is considerably lower, and as it is crowned by a fortress the public has not access to the top. This hill was an island in former times, and the flat ground on its landward side is occupied by the narrow streets of the old town.

The wide, swift-flowing river, the Urumea, does not empty its waters into the bay, as one might expect, but follows a course immediately to the east, the river mouth facing due north. Thus we have a creditably sized stream and a large bay near at hand entirely independent of each other—rather an unusual arrangement on Nature's part.

A fine promenade, the *Paseo de la Concha*, leads round a portion of the bay, and ends in a small park on which the casino looks. Beyond the casino is the *puerto*, or harbour, lying beneath the slopes of Monte Urgull. The park and the *Paseo* were bathed in sunshine all day long and were a favourite resort of old and young. *Nounous* there were in plenty, and so great was the number of babies that one could not help thinking the stories of the depopulation of Spain must be greatly exaggerated. The nurses in their neat uniform made picturesque little groups as they stood gossiping together, all knitting furiously, their charges meanwhile asleep or playing close by. The small white muslin caps of the *nounous* were curious, worn as they were at the back of the head, on top of the tightly dressed, heavy knob of hair. Every nurse had a large pair of old-fashioned earrings, great balls of silver, which caught the light as the wearer moved her head in animated conversation. The country women in the district all wear their hair in this stuck-out fashion and have small black caps fitting closely on the top of it. In this northern part of Spain nearly all the young girls have fair skins and

pink and white complexions, while in the south or east this is rarely seen. The men here are for the most part rather short and squat, and of somewhat stocky build.

The park was well kept and pretty enough even in winter, with its evergreen shrubs and its trim turf where daisies were flourishing amain. The palms were all carefully tied up, in case blasts from the Atlantic should shatter their branches. On the terrace of the casino invalid soldiers used to lounge in the sunshine, while staid-looking *enfermeras* hovered in the background.

The harbour was rather an attractive place with its many fishing-boats and the constant coming and going. Ox-wagons were used as a means of transport—a painfully slow method of conveying anything, one would think, though no doubt extremely picturesque. Some of the older streets lead down towards the *puerto* and little ragamuffins were always playing about here. We were interested one day in seeing with what reverence they greeted a Franciscan friar who was walking along the pavement. One after another the urchins ran up to him, seized the crucifix which was hanging from a cord round his waist and kissed it fervently.

Our first excursion was to Monte Igueldo, so that from its summit we might find out the lie of the land. A tram-car which runs along the sea-front took us to the foot, where we stepped into the funicular-railway train—its only passengers. A short journey, during which we passed many pines on the steep hill-side, a few garden roses blooming in their midst, brought us to the top. Here we enjoyed a glorious view both over land and sea, and, as it was afternoon, the light was at its best.

We wandered at leisure round the rustic walks with which the summit is terraced, finding fresh view-points at every turn. In the flower borders there were still a few blooms in spite of the season. The beautiful mauve

veronica was in full flower and we saw pink dianthus and blue periwinkle, but the hydrangea blossoms and the scarlet salvias had suffered badly and were hardly an ornament. Vigorous bushes of euonymus were growing everywhere, and it was a joy to see their glossy green leaves and bright red berries.

We went to the top of the old lighthouse which occupies the highest piece of ground, and gazed on the long line of Pyrenees. In vain we scanned the horizon for a patch of snow—there was not such a thing to be seen. With Mont Canigou in mind, that impressive peak at the Mediterranean end of the range, we felt the Basses-Pyrénées to be slightly disappointing. Nevertheless, some of the hills were very striking with their sharp outlines seen against a transparent sunset sky. *Les Trois Couronnes*, a bold-looking summit with which we had already become familiar during a visit to St. Jean de Luz, was seen from a different angle here, but looked just as fine from the Spanish side—where it is known as *Peña del Aya*—as it did from the French. The Cantabrian Mountains stretched away to the south and west, and below us lay the lovely blue bay with the town of San Sebastián fringing its shore.

We had tea in the large casino restaurant, which is just below the old lighthouse (the new *faro* is lower down the slope), and the waiter, being conversationally inclined, and having no other customers, lingered near the tea-table and regaled us with intermittent chat. After tea he asked if we would care to see over the building, and, on our replying in the affirmative, he went away to fetch a big bunch of keys.

He took us from room to room—all of which were locked—explaining everything and naming the points of interest in the extensive view. The rooms are large and filled with such numbers of windows that one had almost

an uninterrupted view of the coast-line in both directions. Northwards we looked towards the dim, grey land of France and were shown the position of Biarritz. Just beyond San Sebastián some tall chimneys showed where lay the busy harbour of Pasajes. Westwards the coast-line stretched away to Bilbao and Santander; the hills come sheer down to the sea here, and the effect is very fine. Neither port was visible, but near where the smoke was rising, we were told, lay Bilbao.

"In this room," said our informant, "the *gente elegante* watch the sun sink into the sea, then they dance till the early hours of the morning." He deplored the fact that we were seeing the Casino in the dead season. "Just now we only have the common furniture set out, as only the common people come to dance, but during the summer the room is filled with our *muebles elegantes* to match the *gente elegante*."

We witnessed a wonderful sunset before we left Monte Igueldo. The sky was intensely clear, and peak after peak was outlined against the luminous background. At first the hills were pale amethyst, but as the sun sank they turned to dark purple. Even distant objects looked vivid and distinct. Presently the last rays of the sun disappeared, the glory faded, and the dark came down. Once more the only passengers in the funicular, we reached the bottom of the hill, and began the beautiful walk back to the hotel. We passed the *carcel* or prison, a picturesque building near the shore, and later went through the tunnel, on top of which the Royal Palace is built. A rocky headland projects slightly into the bay here and the *Palacio de Miramar* occupies this rising ground. It is a simple but attractive-looking house, of a pleasant red-brown colour, designed by an English architect some thirty years ago. It was a happy idea to have the royal dwelling placed here, as perfect seclusion is obtained, owing to the fact that it is

considerably above the level of passers-by, and yet it is close to the shore and town. We were told that *Los Reyes* do not now make a prolonged stay at San Sebastián, preferring, as they do, Santander, where there is a fine palace. The Queen-Mother, however, spends much of her time here, and interests herself greatly in the welfare of the wounded soldiers, on whose account she organizes entertainments.

The town was all lit up now and twinkling lights were reflected in the clear waters of the bay. Basque workmen were trudging home, their day's work done. A few shops were displaying English Christmas cards, and in one shop window there was a Christmas-tree laden with gifts and fairy lamps, evidently meant to attract English customers. As a matter of fact we saw no one of our own nationality, either here or anywhere else in this part of Spain. Winter is not a popular time evidently, and yet there is no reason why it should not be. True, we were favoured by the weather, and were singularly fortunate in this respect, as after our return to England terrible storms broke over Spain and did enormous damage. Yet there is much to be said for winter travelling. One escapes the fear of excessive heat, the heat which is often accompanied by flies and mosquitoes. There is no overcrowding in the hotels (though even in summer we never suffered from this)—indeed, one is welcomed as a *rara avis* and cordially received. There is one great disadvantage, however, and that is the heat in the Spanish trains. The first- and second-class railway carriages are kept at a hothouse temperature, and on a long journey one feels almost suffocated. Rather a thousand times would one endure the sun in summer than bear the exhausting heat of winter.

On Christmas night we had *turrón* as a final course before dessert, and very delicious it was. It might be well, perhaps, if the inhabitants of Basque-land could be per-

suaded to leave out of their menu the flotsam and jetsam of the seashore. A dish of saffron, of a brilliant yellow colour and intensely sweet, served with cold ham, can be regarded as an interesting experience, but when it is a question of facing certain weird seafaring creatures the stoutest heart must quail. It is difficult to call barnacles, for instance, an attractive form of food, however much sea breezes may whet one's appetite, and yet even they are preferable to a dish of infinitesimal eels (*anguílas*). Yet it is not to be denied that the traveller's curiosity is aroused by these unusual dishes.

At the end of the *Avenida de la Libertad* there is a fine bridge (*Puente de Santa Catalína*) leading across the Urumea, and it was interesting from here to watch the battle between the river and the incoming tide. In spite of the fact that there was no wind, great rollers came surging in from the Bay of Biscay and mountains of spray rose up wherever the waves broke against the embankments. Hundreds of seagulls bobbed up and down on the surface of the water and filled the air with their strident cries. Attracted by the huge breakers which were dashing against the cliff on the east side of the river mouth, we crossed the bridge and walked along towards the *Paseo de Colón*. Here the rocky banks were crumbling and broken down by the force of the waves, which boomed and thundered incessantly.

The struggle between sea and land goes on continuously all along this coast. At St. Jean de Luz, and south of it, the Atlantic is always seeking to steal a little territory from the shore and triumphing in its conquests, and here, even inside *La Concha*, the desperate fight goes on. Just beyond the harbour a part of the esplanade had given way, and a gang of some twenty workmen were daily engaged in trying to repair the damage. Little groups of idlers—ourselves among them—stood and watched them as they

worked, for it was an exciting game and the Basques threw their whole energy into it. They were on flat ground, a narrow ledge, but the rocks were precipitous and the bay was deep. The task of one man was to plunge a bucket, suspended from a long rope, into the water and swing it up full; his position looked precarious and a life-belt lay close at hand. Near him another man was stationed, whose job it was to help to mix cement. From the sea outside big waves came rolling in and broke in showers against the rocks. One great monster flung itself bodily against the Basque, drenching him from head to foot. He solidly stood his ground and neither looked up nor relaxed his efforts, continuing to mix cement as though nothing had occurred. Other workmen were engaged in carrying heavy baskets of rubble on the back of their necks; this they did as they walked down a narrow plank, which heaved up and down with their weight. A hood was made of a piece of sacking, and, with this as a protection to head and neck, they swung the basket high up on their back, and supported it with hands held high above their head—a most uncomfortable method of balancing anything, one would think, the head poked forward as it was to make room for the heavy weight.

Not far from the harbour winding paths lead up Monte Urgull. As has been said, the public are not admitted to the summit, but one can wander uphill for some distance, admiring lovely views during the ascent. After a while we reach the piece of ground which is laid out as a burial-place for the British officers who fell in 1813 and 1836.

San Sebastián was held by the French during the Peninsular War, and it offered a valiant resistance to the Allied force. There were only some 3,000 men in the fortress (*La Mota*) as against 10,000 outside; but the natural defences of the hill, combined with its fortifications, were such that the attackers, under Sir Thomas Graham,

experienced the greatest difficulty in storming it. It has been said that there was mismanagement on the part of the English; whether this was so or not, our side lost heavily during the siege. It was early in July when Sir Thomas Graham arrived with his army, and it was August 31st before the town was finally entered. This was a sad day for San Sebastián—the English set fire to it and it suffered all the horrors of war.

Again in 1836 the town was the victim of opposing forces, the Carlists attacking it while the Royalists, with the help of English troops, defended it.

The enclosure which contains the graves of the British officers is well chosen; it faces north and commands a beautiful view of the sea. It is entered by two small gates, one at either end, and is surrounded by neat borders of spindle-tree (*Euonymus europæus*), whose glossy leaves and bright-red berries give a touch of colour to the stretch of hill-side. Paths lead up and down amongst the grey rocks, a fine specimen of a pine is growing in one place, elsewhere large spindle-trees are flourishing, and a few primroses were in bloom.

On a flat slab of rock the words, "Westminster Square," are faintly legible. Near this is a large group of statuary, and on the rock below the following words are engraved:

Inglaterra nos confia sus glorios restos.
Nuestra gratitud velara su eterno reposo.

The English translation is placed side by side:—

England has entrusted to us her glorious remains.
Our gratitude will watch over their eternal repose.

On the cliff behind this monument are the following words:—

A la memoria de los Valientes Soldados Britanicos que dieron la vida por la grandeza de su pais y por la independencia y la libertad de España.

(To the memory of the brave British soldiers who gave their lives for the greatness of their country and for the independence and liberty of Spain.)

Near by is a much smaller inscription carved on an overhanging rock which is shaded by a beautiful spindle-tree, a glowing mass of scarlet berries. This simple tablet is the most impressive of the three :—

Honor á los héroes que solo Dios conoce.
1808–1814 1836–1838

As we looked at these inscriptions a Spaniard came up with his two little boys and began to explain the significance of the words to them. "The English came to help us," he said, "and we must never forget it." Then he made his children repeat what he had said so that he might be sure they had understood.

We crossed the river one day and took tram to *Barrio del Gros*, but found nothing of interest there. The huge Bull Ring (*Plaza de Toros*), towards which the tramway runs, is ugly enough from the outside, one would think, to repel most people, without inspiring them with a wish to seek even uglier sights within.

A longer excursion, that to Hernani, was more successful. We reached it by motor-bus, and the scenery through which we passed was attractive, hills forming the background everywhere. The land was fairly well wooded, and immense quantities of mistletoe were hanging on the trees. Hernani is a picturesque old Basque village with narrow streets; the balconied houses have great wooden beams and huge projecting eaves, the general effect being reminiscent of Fuenterrabía. The church was closed, so we had no opportunity of seeing its famous woodcarvings. A notice on one side of the building said that the playing of *pelota* (the national game) was forbidden during hours of service.

Victor Hugo, who lived for a time at Pasajes, the charming harbour which one sees in travelling from Irun to San Sebastián, named one of his dramas "Hernani", after the village. This play was first acted in 1830 and was the cause of great excitement in Paris. Supporters of the Romantic school defended it against the adverse criticism of the Classical school, and for a while fierce warfare raged in the literary world.

We made the return journey by tramcar, which takes a somewhat circuitous route through the country-side. It was afternoon and a holiday and all the youths of Basqueland were amusing themselves by playing at football (*futbol*) or *pelota*; the villages through which we passed were crowded with young people and family parties, all enjoying the open air and the lovely mild weather. As we neared San Sebastián the sun was sinking behind the hills and everything was bathed in a golden light. The sky had a faintly green tinge, and wisps of red and yellow cloud were floating in it. In this part of Spain one often sees towards sunset that rich mellow glow which lends such a charm to the landscape of Provence.

CHAPTER XXI

PAMPLONA—RONCESVALLES

THE most dramatic way of reaching Pamplona is by motor-car. The ancient town, the former capital of Navarre, lies, as it were, in the centre of a saucer, with the spurs of the Basses-Pyrénées rising up around it in a circle. The town is about 1,400 feet above sea level, and in motoring from San Sebastián there are some exciting hairpin bends to negotiate as one scales the steep hill-side leading up towards Irunzún. At the top of the rise one drops over the edge of the saucer, if we may say so, and a little later we see the long white stretch of road which leads to the old walled town.

As we dashed along in the comfortable closed car, leisurely country scenes were being enacted on all sides of us—scenes which made us feel remote from speed and modern life. At Irunzún, and also in a village near it, markets were being held, and the streets were crowded with donkeys, mules and ox-carts. The men and youths who were standing about in groups were draped in their beautiful *mantas* or scarves, the colours and patterns of which were a constant source of joy to us in this district. These plaids, which were sometimes of a check or tartan pattern, were usually thrown over one shoulder, making the wearer look like a brigand-chieftain. The scarves were much smaller and were worn loosely round the neck.

In the country-side ploughing was going on; the primi-

tive plough would be drawn, perhaps, by four oxen, harnessed two abreast, with a small mule plodding in front. The heads of the oxen were swathed in heavy sheep-skins, and their bodies were protected from the weather by big blankets thrown over them. Now and again a long line of donkey-riders would come jogging along the road, the animals gay with brightly coloured saddle-cloths and picturesque trappings. At one point a country wench was driving along a herd of baby pigs. Terrified at our approach, the little creatures scampered away squealing in all directions, while the girl made after them flourishing a big stick. Then a group of gypsies passed, and so on till we raced into Pamplona and, swinging round into the *Plaza*, we drew up at our hotel, *La Perla*.

Pamplona, as has been stated, is an old walled town, said to have been founded by Pompey the Great, from whom its name is derived. Since early days it has had a stirring history, and many times it has been engulfed in the waves of warfare which have swept to and fro over the Pyrenees. Situated as it is at the foot of one of the principal passes of the frontier-range, the town has been the victim of invading armies throughout the ages. Charlemagne passed through it in 778, conquering it on his way to Saragossa. On his return journey he demolished the walls, and then hurried on into France by the way he had come—that is by Roncesvalles. For the next thousand years Pamplona had little peace, and in 1808 it was occupied by the French. The Duke of Wellington freed it from its invaders in 1814, but only after a struggle, the position of the town combined with its fortifications making it a powerful stronghold for the enemy.

The present walls are very extensive and much time might be spent in exploring them. The *Ciudadela*, too (the Citadel), of sixteenth-century work, is a massive structure, commanding a splendid position on the banks of

the Arga, on which it looks down. Both from this point and from other parts of the town there are lovely views of the surrounding country. The circle of hills with its many cone-shaped peaks rises up all around, and at their base lies the wide stretch of plain. Many armies have wound their way through that level land where now the railway and the small electric line from San Sebastián, with the road between them, form a link with the outside world.

Our intention had been to follow in the steps of Charlemagne, and journey from Saragossa to Pamplona and so over the Pyrenees by Roland's Pass down to St. Jean Pied-de-Port. However, circumstances necessitated our cutting out Saragossa from the programme and our being content with Pamplona, Roncesvalles, and the famous pass.

Pamplona itself is rather a quaint old town and quite worth a short stay; it seems, somehow, remote from the world, despite the fact that it is on a good motoring-road leading from Spain to France. The streets are narrow and winding, and the houses with their overhanging eaves and many balconies are gaily painted, Basque fashion. To reach the cathedral we leave the *Plaza*—the centre of life for the town—by one narrow street, then turning into another we mount up for a short distance till we arrive at the flat piece of ground on which the fourteenth-century building stands. One must blame the eighteenth century, however, not the fourteenth, for the extremely poor west front, which, quite out of keeping with the rest of the structure, creates an unfavourable impression.

But the interior of the building charms us with its simplicity and its pleasing proportions. The cathedral is rich in treasures of various kinds and the cloisters are full of interest. The tympanum of the doorway leading from the transept to the *claustro* has a very beautiful piece of

carving on its outward side. It represents the Death of the Virgin and is a good example of early sculpture. In the centre we see the lovely figure of Mary, clad in a pale blue robe, lying on her tomb ; to the left four angels with golden aureoles bend over her, while to the right stoops the weeping figure of a man (probably John). Above the Virgin, Christ is seen in the act of receiving her soul, represented by a tiny image. The intervening spaces are filled with the figures of the apostles. One of these is shown with his hands clasped in sorrow and all the faces are full of grief—all save Christ's, whose expression is calm and peaceful. Much of the original colouring and gilding remains and the design of the whole is very fine.

A small chapel opens off one corner of the cloisters and projects into the *patio*. The chief point of interest about it is that the wrought-iron work of the *reja* is made from Moorish chains captured at the battle of Las Navas de Tolosa in 1212. Nearly opposite this little *Capilla de Santa Cruz* is the old refectory, said to be of the thirteenth century—a large room with a pulpit at one side and a buttery-hatch leading from the kitchen next door. The kitchen contains the beautiful fifteenth-century tomb of Charles III of Navarre and his wife, Queen Leonora of Castile. The tomb is in the centre of the room and the two exquisitely carved effigies lie side by side upon it.

The cloisters contain a group of old carved capitals, probably saved from the earlier church, which Street says was founded about the year 1100. The present cathedral was begun by Charles III of Navarre in 1397, and he it was who is responsible for the pulling down of the old building. Some nine of these capitals are placed together near the *Sala Preciosa*, where the Cortes of Navarre used to meet, They are remarkable for their quaint representation of figures or animals ; some of the original green colouring is

still left. Near by are two carved *toros* and a fragment showing a dragon devouring a maiden. The cloister-garth is a charming place with its old *noria* in the centre and the yuccas, palms, and cypresses, all around.

Either in Pamplona itself or on the outskirts there was always something uncommon to be seen. Beyond the *Jardin de la Taconera* and outside the walls one would see the country-folk wending their way home after a day's marketing in town. The women would jog along on their donkeys, invariably with an umbrella somehow suspended behind them. The saddle-cloths were of the loveliest dyes, often scarlet and yellow striped (" blood and gold," Spain's colours), but sometimes of a glorious purple. The harness of the animals was brass-studded and long red or golden tassels hung down from unexpected quarters. Bullock-wagons lumbered heavily past on the muddy roads—the driver, a stately figure, with a long pole, walking in front of his team to show them which way to go. Even these patient beasts were decorated, and crimson and yellow tassels or coloured fringes hung down over their great limpid, tear-dewed eyes. There was something Biblical about these peaceful, pastoral scenes, something primitive and fundamental.

In the town itself it was a pleasure to see the wraps with which the men protected themselves against the weather. Every man and boy had his scarf or plaid—nay, if you were extra rich you had two. One youth had *mantas* thrown over both shoulders ; one was of a checked pattern and the other green, striped dark and light in two shades. Green was a very favourite colour, but blue was also popular. The two sides of the *manta* were often quite different, so that the maximum effect was obtained when the reverse was seen at the same time. Thus one side would be dark blue and the opposite side green and buff striped, or again

one side was maroon and the reverse dark green. In some cases the scarves were self-coloured with no pattern, but in others various kinds of ornamentation were seen. Dark scrolls on a light ground looked effective, and once we saw a lovely buff *manta* with a raised " pineapple " pattern of shaded blue and green. It seemed odd in a country where the women so often dress in black that the men should delight in these different colours and show such individuality in the choice of them.

In the narrow streets picturesque old villains would go trudging along—a great fringed *manta* thrown over the shoulder, a stout staff in one hand on which they would lean heavily, shabbily shod in disintegrating *alpargatas*. Many of the men looked extremely old and tottering, though doubtless they were not really full of years. A blind man led by a tiny child would feel his way over the cobblestones, moving his stick cautiously at every step while his sightless eyes were turned up heavenwards. Then a market-woman would come along laden with huge heads of fennel. Through the open doors of the small shops one would see strings of sausages hanging down from the rafters, coil upon coil of all sizes and colours ; these would alternate with salted fish as flat as a board and hung up by the tail.

Through these winding streets we threaded our way one morning to the *Ayuntamiento*, where the gifts and relics belonging to Sarasate are housed. For it was in Pamplona that the famous violinist was born in the year 1844. One or two rooms in the Town Hall are given up to the displaying of the great man's presents, but it is rather a heterogeneous collection, and the fact that many of the objects have been given by kings or princes does not seem necessarily to add to their artistic value.

We felt sorry to leave *La Perla* (praised by Ford in days gone by and still as worthy of its name) and bid *adios* to

Pamplona, but the time had come when we were to follow in Charlemagne's steps and cross the Pyrenees. Having failed at Saragossa but successful at Pamplona, Charlemagne in the year 778 safely crossed the Pyrenees with the bulk of his army, while his rearguard—in charge of Roland —was still at Roncesvalles. Alas, for his well-loved nephew, the valiant Roland, who still had the fateful Pass to cross! What would not Charlemagne have given could he have saved him from an early death? "The blast of that dread horn," the frantic summons for help which Oliver had at last succeeded in persuading his brother-in-arms to sound, was sounded in vain, and Roland, his faithful friend, and all their brave band went down before the onrush of the Basques. Deep was the consternation in Christendom when it was noised abroad that the rearguard of the King of the Franks had suffered such a crushing defeat! So runs the well-known legend, and if it is not historically accurate in every point let us blame the romantic setting of the scene, the mountains, streams, and forests, all of which stimulate the imagination and encourage flights of fancy.

Roncesvalles, in olden times, was on a direct pilgrimage route that led from France to Santiago de Compostela. Tradition says that in the ninth century a star of great brilliance pointed to a certain spot in this Galician town where lay the remains of St. James the Greater. A church was at once built upon the site and henceforth a stream of pilgrims began to flock to its portals. A portion of this vast procession passed over the Pyrenees from France, and it was these wanderers who partly helped to keep alive the legend of Roland's reverse.

As our car raced along the twenty-six miles from Pamplona to Roncesvalles, uphill, down dale, or round tortuous curves skilfully manipulated by a careful driver, the mists of morning gradually cleared away and blue sky appeared

overhead. Up the slopes of the Basses-Pyrénées we went, zigzagging along the hill-side or dashing over a bridge and almost fearing to peep down at the gorge below. White ribbon-like clouds were resting on the tops of the firs and the distant mountains were shrouded in mist. Yet there was a blaze of colour all around. Beech- and oak-trees were still clothed in their lovely brown foliage, and as for the masses of boxwood which grew everywhere, it was a riot of pink, red, yellow, and orange. The pink stalks of the dogwood and the yellow stems of the willows helped to contribute to this glow of colour.

By the road-side grew quantities of "Pain de loup" or "Pied de griffon", the *Helleborus fœtidus*. We would have gladly stopped to investigate this plant to make quite sure that it was what it appeared to be from a flying glance, but time pressed and we had to hurry on. A Swiss botanist says that it is "a mysterious plant which grows on mountains", and, furthermore, he tells us that Dauphiné shepherds give it to their sheep as an antidote to the "false hellebore", a poisonous plant which grazing animals sometimes eat.

Dotted about the hill-sides were innumerable stacks of dried bracken, a stout pole driven through the centre to hold the mass in place; this is a characteristic feature of the Basque country, the bracken being used as bedding for the farm animals. We passed many sheep and goats on our drive, the long-haired, long-legged sheep of the Pyrenees. Were the Pamplona scarves made from that long, soft, yellow fleece? we wondered. The horses grazing on the hill-side all had on clanging cow-bells—a necessary precaution, doubtless, in this trackless land of mist. Great piles of charcoal by the road-side lay ready stacked for transport.

Finally we passed through Burguete and reached the

beautiful beech avenue which leads to the hamlet of Roncesvalles—a level stretch of road a mile or more in length. Shortly after we stood in the Church of the Monastery and a toothless sacristan was showing us all its treasures. Space does not permit of describing the gorgeous vestments, the jewelled Virgin and Child, the enamelled plaques, the pictures, the relics of Roland and Turpin (Archbishop of Rheims), or the lovely tomb of Sancho *el Fuerte* in the thirteenth-century hall which opens off the cloisters.

It is time to leave Spain now, and we must ascend the rising ground which leads to Roland's Pass—alas, there is no time to explore the ruined chapel by the road-side! We reach the head of the pass and have the sensation that we are on the top of a house wall! Sheer down below us is the valley with the long road which takes to the frontier. Down we plunge, round endless hairpin bends, the valley far below us. "And the Basques hurled Charlemagne's rearguard into the valley below, throwing down stones and rocks at them as they fell." It was not difficult to imagine it! But we did safely reach the last Spanish village, Arnéguy, and, having passed the Customs there, we crossed the stream, the Nive, and duly arrived in France. As at Irun, so here, the centre of the bridge marks the division between the two countries. On top of a post is a board, the lettering on which says, "*France–España*." The few minutes' delay at the Spanish Customs was as nothing compared with the interminable wait at the French. We even pictured having to return ignominiously to Pamplona! "*Que hay?*" in despair we asked our driver. His expressive shrug of the shoulders, outspread hands, and enigmatic shake of the head were far more eloquent than words. It appeared the difficulty was a *laissez-passer* to allow the car to go as far as St. Jean-Pied-de-Port (where we were to pick up the afternoon train to Bayonne) and then to

return to Pamplona. Finally, when patience was almost exhausted, the permit was produced and we set out with redoubled speed. The few miles to St. Jean-Pied-de-Port were quickly covered, and here car and driver left us and we had regretfully to bid *adios* to *cosas Españolas*.

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An Appreciation by

E. V. LUCAS

'THE place we're in is always *here*, the other place is *there*,' sings the poet; 'and,' he goes on, 'what a lot of *there* there is, to go and see and go and see and go and see some more.' For those who long for *there* and who would go and see it, the books in this 'Wayfarer' series seem to me to supply the best first-aid. Although they make no pretense to be guide-books in the ordinary use of that term, they say enough both to pave the way for visits to the countries described and to create the desire to visit them. Armed with a 'Wayfarer' volume, the adventurous traveler can, at any rate, set his foot on the new desired soil with confidence.

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